

M. W. SUGATHAPALA DE SILVA

DIGLOSSIA  
AND  
LITERACY



CENTRAL INSTITUTE  
OF INDIAN LANGUAGES  
MANASAGANGOTRI, MYSORE (INDIA)



## **DIGLOSSIA AND LITERACY**

**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES  
ADULT LITERACY SERIES**

*CIIIL Adult Literacy Series 2*

DIGLOSSIA  
AND  
LITERACY

**M. W. SUGATHAPALA DE SILVA**  
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**CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES**  
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## **FOREWORD**

Poverty and illiteracy are concentrated in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. India alone, where 56% of the population is below the poverty line, houses 400 million of illiterates constituting 50% of the total world illiterate population. This frightening statistics has often blinded scholars and planners to certain basic cultural facts of life in these countries.

Illiteracy is often equated with lack of education. In historical times, at least in India, this was not true. The existence of voluminous folk wisdom pertaining to philosophy, sciences and the life cycle based on agriculture will bear testimony to this. With the conquest by aliens, onset of modernism and destruction of the rural centres of dissemination of traditional culture and knowledge an illiterate person is reduced to the level of the uneducated. In the context of literacy movement this factor has to be borne in mind. Recently the Central Institute of Indian Languages, in collaboration with the Jabalpur University, experimented in reviving the use of traditional folk communicators for the dissemination of modern knowledge. A two week orientation programme organised by the

Institute for about thirty folk communicators yielded such rich dividends that its immense possibilities were recognised and commended by no less a person than the Minister for Information and Broadcasting of the Govt. of India.

Before talking about the communication constraints a statement is in order about the literacy curriculum. In countries where there is a good deal of central planning at successive levels of planning and administration, the curriculum is designed by experts at the top without reference either to the felt needs of the community or needs of the community is observed by trained social scientists. In many cases therefore the material used for literacy is irrelevant to the community and it is no wonder that it fails to motivate the people. A word of caution is necessary at this point. If the material is to be relevant in the sense of improving the quality of life of the illiterate masses and arousing and preparing them to participate in the socio-economic reconstruction of the country, then this may appear to clash with the entrenched elitist vested interest. It is in this sense that Paulo Frere speaks of education as being subversive. Unless there is an awareness of these problems by all concerned and carefully laid down plan of action the literacy efforts are doomed to failure.

In multilingual countries literacy poses a serious challenge. Diglossic situation, in one sense, is a simplified reduced version of the multilingual situation. Take for instance the Tamil situation in India; a person is simultaneously confronted with the Pre-Sangam, Sangam and the Post-Sangam literary language, the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin varieties of speech forms, the Aiyar and Aiyangar, the Padeyachi and the fisherman subvarieties, the speech forms of Coimbatore, Kanyakumari or Madras city, the platform speech and the speech of intimate communication, the various styles and registers of Tamil besides the other languages one may be called upon to use as part of his vocation. In this context literacy efforts must solve the conflict between instant communication and the process of standardisation. In multilingual countries, therefore a, multi-model approach to literacy is essential. This approach would

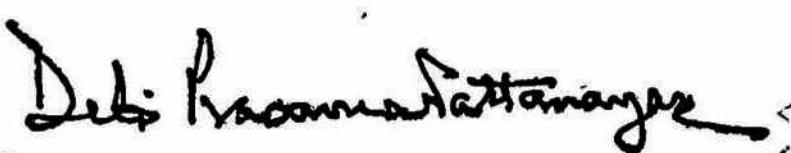
accept instant communication as the starting point, but relate it to the standard as well as the diverse manifestations of the language so that the scale of communication may be widened both in the synchronic and the diachronic axes. This will not only make intergroup communication possible and help accelerate the process of standardisation but also make the accumulated wisdom of the past available to the new learner.

In multilingual countries languages enter into dominant and minority relationship. In countries where a few dominant languages are recognised as media for higher education, administration and mass communication, literacy efforts among the minority languages must develop a bilingual focus. Without a clear strategy linking the language of instant communication with the language of education, intellection and thus of privilege, the literacy efforts are bound to suffer.

All these demand a good deal of sophistry in planning and education and participation of linguists with applicational bias in this venture. There are miles to go in this regard.

This small monograph by Prof. M. W. S. De Silva demonstrates the role and commitment of linguists in this important area of national reconstruction in the developing countries. Prof. De Silva's affiliation with the Institute for six months was possible through a Ford Foundation grant. We are thankful to Prof. De Silva for giving this monograph to the Institute which embodies research results not only of this visit, but earlier and later visits to the subcontinent. I have no doubt that this monograph will be a valuable addition to the linguistic literature pertaining to literacy.

Christmas  
1976



(Debi Prasanna Pattanayak)  
Director  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It will be seen that a fair proportion of this essay is based on what was discovered particularly in 1974-5, when I spent a research year in India and Sri Lanka. I must, therefore, place on record my gratitude to those who made this research year possible: to the Leverhulme Trust and the Central Institute of Indian Languages at Mysore for financing the programme; to the British Council for financing my travel under the Commonwealth Universities Cooperation Scheme; to the linguists at Annamalai University and at the Central Institute of Indian Languages for their help with the local languages; to my University for releasing me for a year; and, of course, to my colleagues for sharing my work during my absence. I appreciate the encouraging gesture shown to my work by my good friend, Dr. D.P. Pattanayak, the Director of the CIIL, by asking me to write this essay as a monograph of his Institute. I am proud to be linked with the CIIL in this way: the written word finds a more lasting association. My thanks are due to Michele Perkins for preparing the manuscript for the press.



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## **1. PREAMBLE**

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THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION for this essay is my continued interest in the linguistic behaviour in diglossic communities during the past decade. I was born and brought up in such a community, and it is clear to me from whatever introspective insights I possess that the learning strategies, attitudes to expression and points of emphasis, as well as the choice of criteria for norm specification, are significantly different in these communities from those in other communities which, for the sake of contrast, may be loosely called 'non-diglossic'. There have been many advances (at any rate, changes) in the teaching methods employed, and learning strategies presented, in the classroom since the time I was a schoolboy, but a language classroom in a south Asian diglossic environment today is little different from what I remember of it from my school days. The way I was

taught to read and write and write compositions in Sinhalese and the way Sinhalese school children are taught these crafts today both differ drastically from the comparable learning activity of, say, my children whose first language is English.

It must be said, however, that my observations which are made in the body of this essay stem, not from any personal reminiscences, but from a fair number of case studies I have made during the past few years. As far as possible, I have refrained from allowing my memories to influence these case studies, and I have always refrained equally from pre-judging the issues; my findings in recent years have, on the other hand, enabled me to recover more vividly my own involvement in the classroom in a diglossic setup. (While I am on this impertinently personal note, may I be permitted to be immodest enough to say that my own Sinhalese writings have never been criticised for grammatical inaccuracies, etc., and (perhaps) therefore, this essay must not be understood as containing an apologia for any of my own frustrations as a Sinhalese language learner in the classroom or as an adult Sinhalese writer. The significance of this comment will become clear when the reader finds that my findings on literacy seem to disfavour diglossia).

In 1974-5, I spent some nine months in India, and about six weeks in Sri Lanka, working on a project to which I gave the title "An investigation into problems of literacy in diglossic communities with particular reference to Kannada, Sinhalese and Tamil". Although during this research I was fortunate enough to associate

with people engaged in teaching literacy to illiterate adults in India, and to have the benefit of taking part in their workshops and seminars; I was never directly concerned with the very valuable task of devising techniques for facilitating universal adult literacy in the sub-continent. Teaching literacy to adult illiterates is a theme that is being pursued now more conscientiously than ever before. Most protagonists of adult literacy campaigns are motivated, quite rightly, by their social conscience. Notice, for instance, the effect in Britain of the recent discovery of two million illiterate adults. That quick measures to eradicate this problem should be sought in a country infested with an illiteracy figure of seventy-five per cent is, therefore, neither surprising nor objectionable.

There is another side to this literacy campaign, namely, the need to discover the causes of illiteracy by asking the sociological question as to why there is so much illiteracy in a world which is technologically so advanced. We may ask, likewise, why the figures for India are even worse than the world average: For a country which had been known in the distant past for its pioneering intellectual activity in the arts as well as the sciences, twenty-five percent literacy is unforgivably low. It is undoubtedly difficult, and perhaps impossible, to discover all the causes of illiteracy in India, but this should not deter research.

One very important factor that must be noticed and explained is the high rate of literacy claimed in the neighbouring island of Sri Lanka which contrasts

dramatically with the low rate in India. I bring Sri Lanka into the picture because, as will be seen subsequently, my research involves that Island. Although the social order in Sri Lanka is not identical to that in India, they are comparable and share many salient features. They are culturally similar ; both are largely peasant economies ; both are caste-based in social structure ; and so forth. It might be that the smaller size of the Island has something to do with the prevailing situation. It might also be that the law governing compulsory primary education is enforced more diligently and effectively in the smaller island than in the enormous sub-continent. To account for bulk-literacy, we must take note of as many factors as we can glean from evidence and assess the relative contribution of each factor, as far as feasible, to the maintenance of literacy standards as we know them. Until this research is done, the only satisfactory answer to the question "Why is there so much illiteracy" is "We simply don't know".

Another social and psychological question that is worth asking is "Do we *want* universal literacy in our country ?". Such questions are not favoured by the dedicated social worker, but it might well be the case that in certain communities the illiterate adults do not particularly want to be literate. Even the aspirations of such schemes as functional literacy are not always well received in all communities. In a way, all literates do not particularly want the entire communities to become literate. Let me illustrate this with one example. It has been proposed time and time again as a quick and simple solution to mass illiteracy, that if each literate

person took under his wing one illiterate adult and saw him through, universal adult literacy could be achieved in India in five years. An attractive suggestion, indeed, but one which is apparently more rhetorical than practically viable; for, if the solution is as simple as this proposition seems to suggest, why has it never been taken up as a serious venture in India, or anywhere else? When the organization of a society and its attitude to education are such that education-based élitism becomes a divisive minority concern, altruistic endeavours as advocated by the above suggestion become far less practicable than they appear at first sight. Might it be the case, then, that the hierarchical social structure in India somehow contributes to the perpetuation of illiteracy? But, then, what about Sri Lanka, where the social hierarchy is very similar? I am only illustrating how ignorant we are of the causes of illiteracy in our countries. As long as we cannot say for certain what impact each possible cause may have on the perpetuation of illiteracy, we must continue to explore, taking note of each factor that might seemingly be a cause and analysing with some care its impact upon the society with a view to estimating the relative significance of that cause. This is precisely what I have attempted to do during my research year, and the factor I chose was diglossia.

Kannada, Sinhalese and Tamil communities are diglossic. (For more details see later chapters.) Translated into the school or the classroom situation, by 'being diglossic' is meant that these communities have accepted norms of linguistic excellence, the teaching of which is

the purpose of the language teaching curriculum in the school. This normative variety of language is the one that people are expected to write. It is distinct from the various spoken dialects in grammar, lexis and phonology in spite of the shared features which make them mutually comprehensible to some extent. Similar situations are known in almost all language teaching activities everywhere, but, as I shall venture to demonstrate in due course, the linguistic values associated with diglossia are different from the overtones of 'good usage' that all teachers of all languages attempt to inculcate in the learners. With reference to literacy, my investigation had one motive, namely, to discover if this cleavage was in any way responsible for making literacy difficult to achieve. If the investigation showed that the cleavage made the learning of literacy difficult, then, the related question naturally crops up, namely, "Is diglossia responsible for the high rate of illiteracy in India?" Here, once again, we are thrown into confusion when we, inescapably, compare the India figures with figures from Sri Lanka, where the learning of literacy is apparently unaffected by the diglossic character of the Sinhalese community. Could it, then, be the case that the literacy statistics are not comparable in the two countries? Or, perhaps more realistically, might it be that the concept of literacy has different meanings in two countries? And, following from this, might it be that any differences in the definition of literacy in India and Sri Lanka have been motivated by different attitudes to diglossia in the two countries? It is the type of answer we can get for these and other related questions that will enable us to assess the definitions of attitudes to, and the social motivations for,

literacy. I have handled some of these issues in my case studies which will be discussed in summary form in due course.

Let us, for a moment, turn our attention on the educational systems the world over. A fair proportion of the world's population is not only unenthusiastic about literacy but is also unable to derive the desired benefits from the schooling systems operative in their respective countries. It has been suggested that the middle-class oriented (see Bernstein: 1973, etc.) 'banking' concept of education (see Freire: 1970) disfavours the rural, peasant learner. The prevailing educational systems in all parts of the world are geared towards linguistic elaboration and abstract participation. It is Bernstein's belief that, by virtue of their social background, the middle class child enters school equipped with the tools necessary for this activity. Bernstein suggests that

the typical, dominant speech mode of the middle class is one where speech becomes an object of special perceptual activity and a 'theoretical attitude' is developed towards the structural possibilities of sentence organization. This speech mode facilitates the verbal elaboration of subjective intent, sensitivity to the implications of separateness and difference, and points to the possibilities inherent in a complex conceptual hierarchy for the organization of experience.

(Bernstein 1973 : p. 78)

Bernstein maintains that this is not the case for members of the lower working class.

The latter are *limited* to a form of language use, which although allowing for a vast range of possibilities, provides a speech form which discourages the speaker

from verbally elaborating subjective intent and progressively orients the user to descriptive, rather than abstract concepts. (op. cit. p. 79)

Bernstein concludes that

between the school and community of the working-class child, there may exist a cultural discontinuity based upon two radically different systems of communication.

(op. cit. p. 166)

I do not wish to engage in a critical appraisal of Bernstein's work in this essay. It might well be that social class is not the only dominant variable to consider. Poverty is another important variable, and poverty and membership of lower classes are not coterminous. I want, however, to assume for the present purpose that Bernstein must be making sociological sense insofar as social class is at least one variable that is worthy of consideration.

In his *Language in the Secondary Classroom* Barnes (1969,.....1974) reports on a number of case studies in order to assess the amount of communicability in the classroom situation. Unlike Bernstein whose ultimate objective is to discover remedies to help the deprived, Barnes attempts to observe how much a child *can* do in the classroom. Without invoking social stratification as a variable, Barnes discovers that the teachers' attitude to communication in the classroom does not motivate pupil participation as readily as should be the case and does in this sense generate a cleavage, between the classroom use of language and the pupils' normal linguistic usage. The 'banking' concept of education

is, perhaps, partly to blame. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970), and elsewhere, Paulo Freire severely criticises the banking concept and advocates the principle of participatory learning particularly as a device to sustain the interest of the under-privileged learner.

I have talked about this notion of school education as a middleclass, banking system with a purpose. In India, might it be the case that this character of the school system fails to motivate the rural, working-class or 'backward' child to avail himself of the educational opportunities? I am not a student of sociology of education in any significant way, but the South Asian evidence is strong enough to persuade one to uphold the view that the present educational systems are, perhaps, not in the best interests of the 'backward' communities in the South Asian villages. It is conceivable that the linguistic content is particularly in their disfavour. It is a fact that, the world over, more middle-class children benefit from school systems (or, fit the school systems) than working-class ones; India and Sri Lanka are not exceptions. Linguistic cleavage may not be the only reason for this. Poverty may turn school education into a sheer luxury that the starving millions cannot afford, but it must be recognised that even in areas in which education is valued so high that a parent would pawn his belongings to send a child to school, the school system forces some children to stagnate or drop out. The school curriculum does not motivate the child to see its relevance to his kind of living. Some recent tribal education statistics for India (*Education in India 1963-64*) show

that while 72 per cent of the tribal children enrolled in schools in the age group 6-11, their number dwindled away rapidly, going down to 28 in the age group 11-14 and to 13 in the age group 14-16. This is not a tribal matter: a similar picture is given by the statistics of stagnation and drop-out for the whole country (Ahuja 1975). The failure of Government's efforts might be due to the educational philosophy that demands from the lower working-class or the peasant child the abilities of the middle class child which the latter acquires not through his intellectual capacities but through his more conducive social circumstances.

If, following Bernstein and others, we were to conclude that linguistic deprivation is largely responsible for the low rate of education in rural communities, it would be reasonable to assume that the school requirements in diglossias would present a further handicap to children of such rural communities. In some sense, the book language in diglossias is twice removed from the lower working class or rural child: he has to cope, first, with the school-oriented communication modes and, second, with the special requirements imposed upon him by the book language. In such circumstances, the inhibitive effects of diglossia must be considerable, though not necessarily quantifiable. My findings show that the presence of a high variety with its social implications inhibits people in their writing activity. In being made to learn features which are alien to the normal daily usage—as if they are the real elements of his language, which, devoid of them, is incorrect, the learner is forced to emphasise form rather than content: embellishment

rather than essence; imitative ability rather than creativity. These features are widely known in the school writings in South Asia.

Now for a few brief comments on the uses of the term 'Literacy'. It seems to be relevant to make a distinction between *necessary literacy* and *sufficient literacy*, at least for the type of statement I shall be making in the body of this essay.

My own interest in literacy is, needless to say, an academic one. As I have said before I have never been involved in the pedagogic aspects of literacy either for the non-literates or for the neo-literates. Being involved in education, I am naturally concerned with literacy in its widest sense, but in that sense literacy and education are virtually synonymous. In my academic research, my interest lies in discovering through empirical observation how far people's linguistic repertoires and their societies' idealisation of literacy are compatible, and also, how far the acquisition or, at least, the awareness, of literacy can condition people's idealisation of language and linguistic behaviour. The impact of literacy on linguistic evolution, linguistic conservatism, and, even, linguistic chauvinism, come within the purview of my investigation. In short, my primary interests are the sociology of literacy and its impact on human language behaviour at large. I shall, however, attempt to draw from my understanding of literacy in the context of diglossia, at least some facts that might not be altogether irrelevant for practical purpose. From among the pedagogues involved in literacy programming, the definition of literacy

that is closest to my kind of research purposes is the one held by the proponents of the language experience approach to literacy education. I shall attempt to rely heavily on the language experience approach as my pedagogic model in the belief that it is the one that is most relevant for adult education purposes also. My references above to Bernstein, Barnes, Freire and others were made in this spirit.

As my work is on diglossic communities and, therefore, linguistic styles have an important role to play in my research, let us assume that language is but a conglomeration of styles with their conventional functions. Literacy naturally presupposes language. Also, literacy, in any real sense, is expedient only in a language of which the learner is a fluent speaker. Within the so-called 'same language' there can be styles which are unknown to the learner, or which are not within the repertoire of the learner's linguistic functions. Just as literacy learning is inexpedient in a foreign language, even so literacy learning is irksome in foreign styles: Bernstein and Barnes deal with this aspect specifically. It may also be said that literacy is, in some sense, a potential creator of further styles, for literate people, through their association with the expressed styles of writers, evolve ways of expressing themselves which might not have been possible without acquiring literacy. Literacy is thus a device for both unification as well as diversification, at different levels. It is with the acquisition of sufficient literacy that the individual is able to play these conflicting roles. The distinction of necessary literacy and sufficient literacy is, therefore, a useful one. If literacy in this second

sense is virtually synonymous with education, it might be argued that the notion of sufficiency is inapplicable: for, there is never a sufficiency mark in learning. I do use the term advisedly, however. There is a point at which a person's learning is sufficient to grant him admission into the *educated class* or the *literati*. Although he does not necessarily refrain from any further learning, he may, in this regard, be thought of as having reached a sufficient standard for such admission. This is my use of the term 'sufficiency' in this context.

Many people define literacy as the ability to read and write. The dictionaries, too, give this as one definition of the term. In languages such as those in India there is a certain degree of correspondence between the spoken sounds and the letters we use to represent them on paper. This correspondence, where it obtains, is regular, and, if we want a name for this, we may say that our writing systems are to a certain extent phonemic. A writing system is said to be phonemic when the regularity of sound-symbol correspondence is easily discernible. In phonemic writing systems, the learning of reading and writing is a comparatively easy thing to do. This is why, for instance, the initial teaching alphabet, which is modified form of English writing—modified in the direction of phonemicity—has been accepted by many English schools as a good starter for the learner. The UNESCO adult literacy organization has devoted a full volume of their journal *Literacy Discussion* to discuss the advantages of the I. T. A. We in India do not, fortunately, have to evolve initial teaching alphabets; our alphabets are good teaching-learning systems.

In our languages, therefore, the acquisition of the ability to read and write should be comparatively easy. The writing systems in our languages, we can say, are adequately designed to enable minimum literacy. The ability to read and write is minimum literacy, or NECESSARY literacy.

When I once spoke to a group in England about my interests in literacy research, some English school masters asked me whether I would consider the ability to read the English Daily newspaper called the *Daily Worker* to be literacy. This is an interesting question. These schoolmasters obviously thought that, while all literate persons can read the *Daily Worker*, or to put it differently, the ability to read the *Daily Worker* is a *necessary* requirement for being literate, that ability alone would not be *sufficient* as the definition of literacy in a society in which most people can read and write. Their question was, then not about necessary literacy, but about sufficient literacy: not whether the ability to read the *Daily Worker* is necessary, but whether it is sufficient. I have said above that the definition of literacy as the ability to read and write is a definition based on *necessary* conditions. As a definition based on sufficient conditions, notice the following definition of literacy from a book recently published on the subject:

In modern education literacy has to be conceived as including an ability to express oneself articulately for a variety of purposes, socially, intellectually and vocationally, both in speech and writing; command a capacity to read for information, enjoyment and enrichment; and to respond sensitively and intelligently to what is said as well as to what is written.

(Goddard 1974: p. 21)

In third-world-societies there is need for programming literacy in both dimensions— both to impart the necessary abilities as well as to enable people to become sufficiently literate. As I have said before, the illiteracy figures for India are appallingly high, and, for those unfortunate many, sufficient literacy is even further than a dream world. Many have passed the necessary stage via schools and via adult education schemes, but in order to grant them all sufficiency in literacy the educational technology has to be radically overhauled; the desperate need, to my mind, is an overhauling in the direction of language experience. This is particularly so in diglossic communities with the notion of prestige associated only with the high variety of usage. In our overhauling efforts we should plan to introduce methods which would eventually enable the bulk of the population to express themselves

articulately for a variety of purposes, socially, intellectually, and vocationally, both in speech and writing; command a capacity to read for information, enjoyment; to respond sensitively and intelligently to what is said as to what is written.

(Goddard, op. cit.)

It is one's observation, however, that such a degree of sufficiency is still beyond even the average university student or graduate: hence the need for a reappraisal of teaching strategies. The two requirements, namely the need for necessary literacy programmes as well as sufficiency programmes, must be met simultaneously, for, as John Dewey once said, the progress is not in the succession of studies but in the development of new attitudes towards, and new interest in, experience

We have noticed that Indian writing systems are phonemic to a large extent and, therefore, not too cumbersome to learn. Those in the business of teaching literacy know, however, that the teaching of letters in isolation is too time consuming and dull. Many projects have succeeded in teaching literacy via whole words. It is equally dull and often futile to attempt to teach via words which have little or no semantic relevance to the learner. The learning of literacy becomes a meaningful operation only when it is associated with personal experience. For, as Nora Goddard points out,

Literacy in this sense must have its first beginnings in sensory and social experience, for it is not possible to understand fully what has not been either felt at first-hand or entered into through empathy.

(Goddard op. cit. p. 21)

My comments on problems of literacy in diglossic communities must be understood as an attempt to observe critically the techniques of literacy acquisition in the communities under investigation, by a proponent of the language-experience approach briefly outlined above.

## **2. CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGLOSSIA**

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The study of literacy has hitherto been confined to the acquisition of the skills of reading and writing *per se*, without any significant reference to the wider issues which condition the extent and content of literacy, as well as those issues which, in a circular way, are in turn conditioned by the extent, content, and the very nature of literacy in a given community. Seemingly identical issues are differently emphasized in literate and non-literate communities; abilities and objectives vary between the two (as, indeed, between any number of sub-divisions of each). Types of emphasis put on communal issues, social objectives and aspirations determine the content of literacy, and the motivations for or constraints on its spread. Linguistic communities are variously stratified: there can be, and often are, socially marked strata, with or without overtones of prestige or social gradation; there can be occupationally determined diversification;

where education is widely prevalent, there can be unifying influences, based on models of excellence and on modes of imposition that are characteristic in educational systems, which may open new roads to standardisation and its consequences. The values attached to different forms of linguistic behaviour are not the same in every community: it cannot be said, for instance, that the speech habits of, say, the artisans is regarded as sub-standard or inferior (or standard or superior, for that matter) the world over. Likewise, not every community automatically looks upon its literates (if there are any literates) for models of excellence: in some societies it is not easy to distinguish between a literate and an illiterate individual by means of their form of speech alone; the crystallization of such notions as 'educated speech', etc. is the product of long periods of literacy and education and of educated leadership.

Even in the same community, values attached to speech types are not always static; they change along with changes in other political and social values. Let me give an example. In the case of Tamil, the speech of the Brahmin community had enjoyed some regard and esteem until very recently. The changes in the political, and concomitant cultural, values have relegated the Brahmins to a less prestigious position in the Tamil society. As a consequence of this political and cultural change, the high or formal variety of Tamil has been stripped of Brahman (=Sanskrit) features, and the 'high' feature slots thus vacated, have been filled with seemingly 'pure' Tamil characteristics discovered in the classical Tamil usage. I have already said that similarity in

social stratification does not in itself grant the same status to comparable speech styles. That is to say, the fact that the high caste speech is prestigious in one community does not in itself predict that in all caste-based societies the high caste forms will be regarded as prestigious *ipso facto*. For instance, even during the time when the high caste speech was regarded with respect in Tamilnadu, Sinhalese speech habits were never stratified for prestige on a caste-scale. The criteria a community may choose for defining Linguistic prestige thus depends on the community's own sets of values which may change and be moved up or down along the parameter of prestige. While linguistic stratification is symptomatic of social stratification, and linguistic prestige is symptomatic of the transient notions of social prestige, the concept of literacy and, indeed, the content of literacy are symptomatic of the entire complex embodied in this sociolinguistic activity. The study of literacy in the context of its relation to sociolinguistic complexities is still virgin territory.

A society's attitude to literacy is dependent upon a number of factors. The most significant of these, for the present purpose, are the following: the presence or absence of a sense of prestige with which certain forms of linguistic behaviour are held in the society; the associations people may find necessary to make between prestigious speech behaviour and good written language; the presence or absence of any strong movements dedicated to puristic endeavours; the social desire to either delimit the domains of literacy for the creation of an elitist minority or propagate literary activity beyond

such limits to produce universal literacy; the extent of freedom and influence the writers and the written word may enjoy in a given community; the types of pressures brought to bear upon the learner as well as the learner's capacity to cope with such pressures; and, perhaps above all, the society's own thinking as to whether literacy is desirable or not.

All these complexities are well demonstrated in diglossic communities. I have, therefore, made an attempt in this book to interpret the meaning of literacy in diglossic circumstances with reference to three diglossic communities, namely, the Kannada, Sinhalese and Tamil speaking communities of South Asia. As far as I know, this is the first attempt to study problems of literacy or interpret the implications of literacy from this point of view. Owing to this pioneering nature of my survey, therefore, it will be required of me to justify further my choice of diglossia (as opposed to, say, bilingualism) and then why I choose these three particular communities; for it has been suggested (if only by those whose research has not been in the area of in-depth analysis of problems of diglossias) that diglossia is a miniature bilingual situation and that problems of literacy in diglossias cannot be any more intricate than or different from those in bilingual situations, and that the latter are already known. Linguistically, most studies of diglossia that are available in print are largely typological comparisons of the high and low features with little reference to social correlations and motivations; this approach has not helped our understanding of diglossic behaviour as a particular sociolinguistic issue distinct from bilin-

gualism. In short, the theoretical relevance of diglossia has not been studied very much. I shall, for this reason, now take a very brief excursion into the nature of diglossia dealing particularly with the functional dissimilarities between diglossia and bilingualism, as well as between diglossia and 'dialects'; as a continuation of this I shall discuss in the next chapter, again briefly, the nature of writing conventions and their potential capacity to foster diglossic behaviour. In these introductory discussions, I shall also examine the beliefs that sustain diglossia and endeavour to relate these beliefs to the notions that are held about literacy in such communities.

The much quoted definition of diglossia that Charles A. Ferguson provided in his classic paper (Ferguson 1959a) reads as follows:

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or of another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.

(p. 236)

Ferguson refers to this superposed variety as the high variety or H, and to the 'primary dialects' as the low variety or L. For the sake of convenience, I shall use the same labels in this essay to refer to the appropriate varieties. Excepting in certain matters of detail, Ferguson's definition fits the diglossic communities I have

chosen to investigate; the minor modifications to this definition which might be required to accommodate my communities will become apparent in due course.

A comparison with the functioning of bilingualism and dialect diversity, as well as with register or style distinctions obtaining in almost all linguistic communities, would reveal that, in its functional status, diglossia presents a phenomenon which has characteristics unique to itself.

There are, undoubtedly, some similarities between the varieties in a diglossia and the two (or more) 'language' complexes obtaining in a bilingual (or multilingual) setting. There are, however, significant functional differences between diglossic situations and bi- or multilingual situations. The main difference is that, in a non-diglossic bilingual situation, the individual has a fair degree of freedom of choice between 'language 1' and 'language 2'; if the participants are equally conversant with both languages, either may be used in most situations. In this sense the individual's choice of 'language 1' or 'language 2' is not necessarily socially predetermined in relation to the situation involved. There is no social restriction, for instance, against the use of either language by a bilingual individual when he talks to equally bilingual members of his family. In diglossia, on the other hand, the functions of the high and low varieties are socially determined, so that the use of the high variety in normal family conversation is disallowed (i. e. "it is not the done thing"). Likewise, the use of the low variety in circumstances for which the high

variety alone is socially prescribed is not generally tolerated. Fishman (1967), therefore, concludes that

bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic behaviour whereas diglossia is a characterization of linguistic organization at the socio-cultural level. (p.34)

Rather than being a subsidiary of bilingualism, diglossia can co-exist with it, so that, as in the case of, say, the educated Sinhalese-Tamil bilingual, the individual is required by the social conventions to make appropriate uses of the high and low varieties appropriate to each community as necessitated by situations and circumstances. Fishman explicitly admitted in 1967 that a co-existence of diglossia and bilingualism would be entirely feasible, and in fact demonstrated this in the title of his paper, namely 'Bilingualism with and without diglossia ; diglossia with and without bilingualism'.

Stewart (1962) makes a pertinent distinction between bilingualism *per se* and diglossia ; this I quote below as a particularly relevant point for our present purpose :

Situations involving bilingualism can be expected to be fairly unstable and to eventually result in the dominance of one of the languages over the other. In contrast, a diglossia situation is one in which the juxtaposed linguistic systems are sufficiently alike in some ways to encourage their structural fusion at certain points. This, in turn, allows for enough mutual identification of the two systems on the part of their users that they may function as situational variants of each other. Such a functional complementation of two linguistic systems is characterized by more stability than is usual in other kinds of bilingualism, so that diglossia situations may endure for considerable

stretches of time without any serious encroachment of one of the languages upon the domains of the other. (p. 149)

As Ferguson has himself shown (in the above quotation from him for instance), there is a significant distinction between normal or commoner garden dialect diversities obtaining in linguistic communities and diglossic distinctions. For one thing, dialects, when they are definable, are recognized on social and geographical parameters, so that they contribute to the organisation of multimorphous communities rather than unified ones tending towards identical verbal behaviour. In the case of diglossia, however, the use of the high variety is not restricted to any one geographical area or any one social class; every person is required to learn and use it for the purposes for which it has been prescribed by social convention. The education system ensures that the high variety is taught to everyone who goes through it. Here, a similarity might be seen between high varieties and standard usages: both have a unifying influence; both are educationally inculcated; and so forth. The difference between these two (which, for us, is significant) is that while the high variety in a diglossia has socially determined domains of function, standard languages do not necessarily have such delimited functioning. Note also the following comment by Stewart (1962):

In situations involving different geographical or social dialects, each linguistic sub-system, or dialect, is in most cases used by its speakers to the exclusion of other dialects of the same type. That is to say, speakers of different geographical or social dialects do not normally have command of each other's linguistic systems. Dialect differences, far from being part of the productive

linguistic repertoire of the members of the wider speech community, are historically imposed upon individuals by their geographical provenance or group membership. (p. 150)

As Stewart has shown on the same page (f. n. 4), It is possible for originally different geographical or social dialects to come to be used coterminously in a diglossia relationship. But when this happens, the speech forms cease to be geographical or social dialects as such, and become instead the potentially common property of all members of the speech community.

The phenomenon that is closest to diglossic behaviour is the differentiation of styles or registers in linguistic communities [of course more particularly in complex linguistic communities (Gumperz 1962)]. We have shown that the use of language 1 or language 2 is not necessarily socially pre-determined for the bilingual individual. He may choose one or the other, or switch from one to the other, depending upon the participant's command in the two languages in question. Every individual, however, keeps the different styles apart most of the time, under normal circumstances; he does not, for example, use in family conversation a style of speech appropriate for public speaking. This mutually exclusiveness in the functions of different styles is closely parallel to the similar distinction obtaining between the high and low varieties in diglossia. There are, however, at least two important differences between style diversity *per se* and diglossic differentiation. Firstly, style diversity is a characteristic of any dialect irrespective of whether the linguistic community is diglossic or not. Where the community is diglossic the high variety is shared by all irrespective of their dialect differences, and functions,

in this sense, as a pervasive 'style' distinguishing itself from other styles. Secondly, and as Ferguson has himself shown, the high variety in diglossia is grammatically more complex and reflects an allegiance to antiquity or literary usage. Consequently, the high variety in a diglossia is of a different order and distinguishes itself in its make-up both from the formal styles of speech obtaining in non-diglossic communities as well as from the diverse styles that are available in the low varieties in diglossias themselves. It can be argued, as indeed I shall do later in this essay with special reference to literacy problems, that unlike the normal dialects and styles a person may master for his own use, the high varieties in some diglossias never approach the likeness of a component of the user's linguistic competence. In other words, they continue to retain their superposed character.

I have shown, I hope convincingly, that while it does in some ways resemble bilingualism, dialect diversity and mutually exclusive style functions, diglossia is a phenomenon different from all three of them. Diglossia, thus, emerges as a linguistic institution which is worthy of study in its own right. Not all languages are diglossic, and therefore, a number of questions remain to be answered. For example : Why are only some languages diglossic? What motivates the emergence of diglossia? What are the implications of diglossia on linguistic theory as well as on our understanding of linguistic behaviour? To what extent is diglossia a stable language situation, and, if it ever breaks down in a society, what motivates its dissolution? The beliefs in and ideologies about literacy

in diglossic communities (which are by and large used to literacy) must be coloured by the issues that would emerge as answers to these questions. I shall attempt to give brief answers to these questions and examine the views on literacy held in the chosen diglossic situations and the extent to which these views and expectations are compatible with the actual acquisition and maintenance of literacy.

From what I have said so far, the reader will have seen that diglossia is not merely a linguistic matter involving two formally different varieties. This point is very important. It is true that many studies of diglossia which are available in print concentrate solely on the formal linguistic aspects. Nevertheless, such formal linguistic differences are symptomatic of particular values, such as the concept of prestige, held as salient components in the social organisation. Ferguson's own original intention was to bring into focus the sociolinguistic aspects of the phenomenon. Notice his subsequent statement.

The original definition of diglossia was based almost completely on factors outside pure linguistics. That is, they were social factors, or factors of function rather than structure. And I would stand by this approach to the problem. As soon as we try to define socio-linguistic situations in terms of linguistic structure, we find that the same kind of structure can be used for different purposes in different communities, and vice versa.

(Ferguson 1962 a : p. 173)

This brings us conveniently to the issue of the individual in the context of social expectations and demands, in relation, of course, to the perpetuating character of diglossias. There is a communal belief in diglossias that

the high variety is somehow more correct and more elegant and presents a respectable medium for the proper conduct of formal affairs. In this sense, the high variety is seen to embody some sort of law and order externally imposed upon the individuals in the society. This does not mean, however, that every individual is capable of adhering to the normative rules of prestigious conduct; nor does it mean that all those who profess to adhere to them do so with equal accuracy are the same degree of dexterity. The illiterate sections of these communities would openly declare their ignorance of the high usage and confess to the incorrectness and inelegance of their linguistic use; there could be, even among the public personalities, a small number of individuals, who might enjoy a high degree of popular esteem and respect, but who, owing to their lack of formal education or book-experience, would not attempt to use the high variety but conduct all formal activities in, at best, a somewhat tidied-up version of their vernacular usage. Both these parties are forgiven by the society. A peasant cultivator in India or Sri Lanka, for instance, would never be publicly denounced for his ignorance of the high language. Likewise, a public personality (like, say, the late K. Kamaraj of Tamilnadu) would never suffer a setback as a result of his apparent lack of mastery in the high usage: I cite the instance of Kamaraj because it is well known that he spoke a low variety Tamil in public. This degree of tolerance is built into the desire to maintain group standards, for, as Sprott (1958) says:

It is true that groups vary in the 'tightness' of their standards; some are more 'free and easy' than others, and some

members may be tolerated by a group even though they behave, from the point of view of the group, very 'oddly'.

(p. 13)

Such tolerance would not be shown to the membership in between, who profess to be literate and conversant with the stratified usage. They are the custodians of the prestigious standards. While all individuals are aware of the availability of 'respectable' standards, it is this middle group that advocates their use and profess to be proficient in it; and, ironically, it is their position that is most vulnerable in the society, for their inadvertent 'errors' of conduct are rarely tolerated or forgiven. Special forums are held, for instance, to denounce the occasional violations of literary rules by writers who, naturally, belong to this middle group membership: in Sri Lanka there is an annual convention for this!

Ferguson has shown on a number of occasions the extent to which myths build up about the excellence of the prestigious usage (e.g. 1959a, 1959b, 1962b). The perpetuation of diglossia rests to a very large extent on these myths and beliefs. Another comment on group standards that Sprott (1958) makes may be quoted in this regard:

Because numbers of groups conceive of the standards of their groups as outside of them individually, because they can be put into words and communicated to a stranger or to a new member, and because they can be a matter of reflection and discussion, one easily gets the idea that they really do come somehow or other from outside. The individual may have intentions of his own which conflict with the standards of his group and he feels 'coerced'. The standards may, indeed arouse such reverence that

their origin is attributed to some supernatural being ... When group standards are thought of as something apart from the interacting of the group members, we tend to think of them as somehow 'imposed' upon them. This gives rise to the notion that man is naturally unsocial, and that law-givers or moralists must come along and rescue him from his nasty brutish ways. (p. 14)

It so happens that even where the normative rules are explicitly laid down in grammar books and these grammar books are recognized for their excellence by the community at large, a fair proportion of writers rarely succeed in performing in full accordance with these rules. Where the high variety is not recommended for spoken purposes but is limited for writing only, the degree of homogeneity in accuracy is even less marked. In an attempt to classify the various ways in which the vernacular interferes with the high usage, I have examined elsewhere (De Silva 1974a) some of the 'errors' made by prominent Sinhalese writers. In spite of the persistent belief that all educated Tamils keep the two varieties apart and follow the literary rules correctly, there is evidence from modern writings and formal spoken usage that the actual practice falls far below the expected standard. (see Shanmugam Pillai 1965, 1972.) The same is true of Kannada. The present situation with regard to Telugu which is the culmination of a long dialogue on the advisability of maintaining a cleavage between literary and spoken usages and which embodies a semi-legislative attitude to the problem (I refer to the Telugu Language Committee Report, 1973, and its acceptance by the Andhra Government of which more later) illustrates an approach towards relaxing the disparity where its observance has more often failed than been successful.

### **3. WRITING AND DIGLOSSIA**

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The choice of one form of language for formal usage and another, or some others, for informal purposes does not depend on the availability of a written literature alone. In a society, however primitive it may be, all speakers may, as an established tradition, choose to speak on formal occasions like the richer members, the more aristocratic members or the members of the ruling class, thus reserving the language of their best fluency for daily informal behaviour. In doing this, all speakers do not achieve the same standard in the formal usage: what matters is that they *believe* that they shift their registers appropriately. The participants in a formal situation expect in such societies that the speakers should use the form of language reckoned to be prestigious. In this regard, I must relate an anecdote to prove my point.

Tamils make a distinction between formal and informal usage. It was reported to me by two Tamil university lecturers that when they were invited on one occasion to speak on some vital matters (perhaps relating to agricultural economy) to a gathering of illiterate peasant cultivators, they decided to speak to them in the colloquial Tamil language which the whole audience knew rather than in the formal variety of Tamil which would be alien to them. They obviously attempted to communicate with these people in the most effective way. To their dismay, however, everyone in the audience got up and walked away, laughing and commenting. Upon investigation, they discovered the mood of the audience which may be best summarised as "How can they help us with our agricultural pursuits when they cannot even speak our language!" It is highly unlikely that, being illiterate, and so forth, any of them would have been able to speak High Tamil despite their claim for an 'our language'. Many are the morals that can be drawn from this for our understanding of language in relation to its communicative potential, systemicity, belief-governed (that is, rather than entirely system-governed) acceptability, concepts of perfection, and so on and so forth.

The availability of a written literature and a literate segment in the population does, however, reinforce and, in some sense, stabilise cleavages such as formal versus informal, prestigious versus ordinary, and the like. Particularly where the varieties of usage involved are believed to be forms of the 'same language', as in the South Asian languages examined in this essay, the prestigious variety is invariably supported by some form of 'classical'

literary norm accepted within the community as representative of the glorious heritage of the nation or race. The stabilization of diglossia, to the extent that it is possible to speak of a stabilization in changing linguistic behaviour, and at times the rise of diglossia, stem from the availability of literature and literacy in the community. The simple reason for this is the relative permanence of the written record and its effect as a model for those who aim at safeguarding and accomplishing the marks of excellence in usage. I propose, therefore, to examine at this point the types of writing devices which can in themselves be instrumental in the creation of diglossic usages. Ferguson's own definition of diglossia presupposes a literate society (although all members of the society need not be literate). The converse, however, is not true, that is, not all literate societies are necessarily diglossic communities. It is, therefore, expedient at this point to examine the relationships that exist between written and spoken representations of languages and which of those relationships qualify as capable of causing diglossic cleavages.

Where a language with no previous history of writing is analysed and reduced to writing for the first time (by a linguist or some other person), and where the resultant phonemic (or any other) script is used to record faithfully what is spoken by the people in question, a one-to-one relationship naturally emerges between the spoken language and its written representation. Such a correspondance is an ideal one to have, but it is often inexpedient and inefficient for practical purposes and is, therefore, generally shortlived. The inexpediency arises

out of two factors. For social, political and cultural reasons, people regard diverse forms of linguistic behaviour as components of the same language; such diversities are then referred to as dialects and registers. A written representation which fits one dialect in a one-to-one relationship would not necessarily fit another dialect in the same way. This is especially so if the writing system is alphabetic. In order to endow the entire language with one written form, therefore, exercises toward standardisation are undertaken. This results in the drifting away from the one-to-one relationship to a more distant relationship between writing systems and speech behaviour. This distance might be reflected not only in the symbolic representation of sounds but also in the grammar and the lexis. Secondly, people, as a rule, change their spoken linguistic behaviour more rapidly and more frequently than their written language. The reason for this is obvious. Because of the availability of a more stable model to which reference can be made for authority, the written usages are maintained more conservatively. It is true that, when too wide a gap is caused by the changes in the spoken language and the conservatism of the written, the written form is modified in the direction of the spoken: this accounts for the differences between, say, written Old Tamil and written Modern Tamil or written Old English and written Modern English; however, such innovations are exercised on the written language with much care and deliberation in order not to alter the form of the written representation any more than is absolutely necessary for maintaining a certain degree of comprehensibility. Because of the tendencies towards standardisation and conservatism a gap begins to appear between

the spoken languages and their written representations almost from the time of the first codification.

The nature and intensity of the resultant divergence between the written and spoken varieties of language are not always the same. Broadly speaking, it is possible to distinguish between four types of divergence.

First, there are the writing systems like Chinese. Here the writing represents language not alphabetically or syllabically—i.e., not as linear successions of sounds or syllables, but ideographically (or logographically or morphographically or lexigraphically)—i.e., using one symbol for one idea (or one word or one morpheme or one lexeme). Being in some sense stylised pictographic representations of concepts, the symbols used in such writing systems have an air of timelessness about them. Spoken languages change and diversify; and consequently different persons (in different areas and so forth) may acquire different linguistic expressions for the same concept; but the ideograms being symbolic representations of concepts, diversification of speech will not necessarily promulgate alterations in the writing system. Different persons may read ideograms each in his own pronunciation and each imposing upon them his own grammar. The semantic values of the ideograms are equally shared by all irrespective of their dialectal differences which are reflected in their speech habits. In these instances the acquisition of literacy is a cumbersome process: it is said that a Chinese has to master as many as three thousand symbols to become literate; but the number of symbols is kept in humanly manageable proportions by representing the

world view through a complex organization of concept-symbols devised stylistically to portray a subtle system of categorization. From the point of view of the relationship between speech and writing this kind of writing appears to be an ideal one, for it can always be said that the writing system is, in a sense, a true representation of each person's verbal behaviour. Here, the written form does not exercise a direct influence on the spoken language; nor are major changes promulgated in the writing system by the natural changes in spoken verbal behaviour. This is a case where the writing system does not motivate the creation of a diglossic situation.

In contrast to these ideographic or logographic writing systems there are the syllabic and alphabetic writing systems. Syllabic and alphabetic systems have specific implications of utterance. An Old Tamil text, for instance, cannot be read as if it were modern; a passage of Old English cannot be read as if it were Modern English. In such cases, older texts cannot be read or understood by people who have not had a particular training in the respective older languages. In some situations like this, where the disparity between the old and modern forms of language is clearly and unmistakably represented in writing, there is a general belief that the older written language is better and purer. The prestige thus accorded to the older form has religious and cultural implications. Arabic is an instance of this. The older language, or Classical Arabic, has been associated with the codification of the teachings of Islam and is, therefore, regarded with respect and reverence by all Arabic speakers as the pure representation of their language. Different regional

varieties of Arabic are not mutually intelligible, but the standard literary language is shared equally by people of all regions irrespective of the mutual unintelligibility of their vernacular speech habits. This is a classic case of diglossia: the day to day conversations are impracticable in the prestigious variety and are, therefore, conducted in the vernaculars; all prestigious activities are carried out in the high or prestigious variety, which is, in the minds of the native speakers of all varieties of Arabic, purer, better and more beautiful (Ferguson 1959a). This high or sacred form of language is taught in schools in order to train the pupils to write correctly and speak suitably on formal occasions. Tamil is another instance of this kind. As in Arabic, the high or formal variety and low are vernacular variety in Tamil have mutually exclusive uses; high Tamil has been preserved for cultural reasons.

Then there are situations like the English one. Here the written language is not a prestigious model preserved from the past for any religious or such other reasons. In English writing there are archaic characteristics in so far as the spelling system is reminiscent of an older phase of the language. There are also pedantic lexical items which are used rarely, if at all, in speech. However, the grammar and vocabulary as well as the phonology that the spelling represents can be used in day to day affairs if the speaker so wishes. There is, thus, at least for a reasonable segment of the population, no clear separation between the functions of the varieties. Except where it becomes necessary to use dialectal features for some effect—for instance, for dialogues in novels—the

language represented in writing is the product of some standardization. It is well nigh uniform and is universally acclaimed as the standard. In situations such as this, it is possible to discern a close similarity between a nationally recognised standard speech and the written form (i. e., the grammar, etc. it represents). It is not possible to state a general rule for whether the standard speech conditions the writing or vice versa, or even whether the relationship between them is one of inter-dependence rather than one of cause and effect. This is an aspect which must be examined for each language by carefully analysing the various vicissitudes of its history. In English, there is a striking similarity between standard English or the educated speech of the southeast and the language that is generally written. Because the standard speech may be used in all situations, there are no mutually exclusive settings for the prestigious and local varieties. For this reason, English and other languages with similar characteristics do not normally qualify for diglossia as defined by Ferguson.

We now come to the last type where the divergence between the vernacular and literary varieties is of a different order. We have observed that in Arabic and Tamil the high variety is used on formal occasions as well as for writing. In the type we are presently discussing, however, the high variety is never used for speaking even on the most formal occasions: it is used only for writing. Thus, this type is characterised by the availability of distinctly different spoken and written usages. Two examples of this are Sinhalese and Telugu. I shall have occasion to talk about certain new innovations in

Telugu usage later on, but in Sinhalese, the high or written variety is not used for speech at any time, and there are many features in the spoken usages that would not be permitted in the orthodox written language. Sinhalese (perhaps like Telugu before the recent events which I shall refer to later on) is a clear case of diglossia, for it shows mutually exclusive domains of use for the two varieties; it does, however, differ slightly from Ferguson's defining languages in that many normative literary rules are not allowed even in formal speech. The high variety here has, in this sense, a more restricted function, and consequently the concept of prestige, too, is different here from that in Arabic and Tamil situations.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion it is now possible to say that any linguistic situation which is collectively characterized by the following three principles might be viewed as an instance of diglossia:

- a) There is a superposed variety; the characteristics of this superposed variety have been specified by local grammarians and therefore the divergences between the extreme form of this superposed variety and the local or natural speech habits are statable fairly clearly.
- b) The two varieties function in mutually exclusive settings, graded in terms of prestige; these settings are clearly definable for the most part.
- c) Both varieties are socio-culturally recognised as functionally distinct, and may be contained in the linguistic behaviour of the same individual in the following manner: a person who is a native to such a community

and has a mastery of the prescribed use of the high variety also knows the correct social use of the low variety; although the converse is not true, the education systems in such communities aim at teaching the high variety to all their members.

It will have become clear from our discussion so far that diglossic communities are those which hold rigidly codified values with regard to prestige and propriety and which, in the choice of models of excellence, have created a renaissance of classical cultural and/or religious models are brought to bear upon the society the impact, if only for certain formal purposes, of the values inherent in a supposedly superior or more forceful community. Language being the most dominant means of communicating cultures and values, the impact of these notions of prestige and propriety are most noticed in the people's linguistic behaviour. Linguistic choice is, in this sense, the most significant symptom of this kind of community organisation, whence the term 'diglossia' (rather than 'di-' anything else!).

#### **4. SOME LITERACY FIGURES**

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I hope I have, in the foregoing discussion, succeeded in isolating diglossia as an issue that is of interest to the educationist. I have not yet given the reasons for my choice of the Kannada, Sinhalese and Tamil communities for my research; this I shall do at this point, before entering into a discussion of specific characteristics of literacy in these communities.

I have already shown that there are two kinds of situation which are diglossic. Firstly, there are those situations where 'prestige' is religiously or culturally defined; in such circumstances the linguistic implications of diglossia would include the choice of the prestigious norm for the written usage as well as for the formal spoken usage. There, the written [and formally spoken languages share a fair degree of similarity, at least in

grammar; they are governed by norms specified identically for both. Secondly, there are those situations in which diglossia is a product of some type of puristic élitism which is not conditioned by religious or broadly cultural factors; it is a product more of insecurity and insensitivity to the nature of language as a tool, a means of communication. As for the linguistic usages in these circumstances, the norms specified via classical models are only employed for written purposes. In these situations, the prestigious form is virtually the written form and, consequently, the formal spoken usage is not governed by the classical rules. Much has been written about the first type of diglossia. The second type has been dealt with much less; Krishnamurti (1975, 1976), De Silva (1967, 1974a) are perhaps the only available material. In order to show the similarity between the Sinhalese and Telugu situations I shall present in a subsequent chapter a thumb-nail sketch of Sinhalese diglossia; in it I shall also attempt to illustrate the role of purism in the evolution of diglossic communities.

Arabic and Tamil are examples of the first type of diglossia described above; Sinhalese and Telugu belong to the other type. (The Telugu situation is somewhat different from the Sinhalese one in that the role of purism has been different in the two: I shall refer to this eventually; see also Krishnamurti 1976). In this way, the choice of Tamil and Sinhalese has enabled me to take account of both types of diglossia in my study.

Kannada, strictly speaking, belongs with Tamil. However, the Kannada attitude towards the maintenance of the linguistic duality is much less rigid than the

Tamil attitude and, as a result, modern Kannada literature tolerates a fair amount of colloquial lexis, etc. Still, it is the case, however, that most writers adhere to, or profess to adhere to, a variety of language clearly distinct from the colloquial languages, not only in the lexis but also in grammatical matters.

Although at the beginning I chose the Tamil and Sinhalese situations as distinct types of diglossia and included the Kannada community in my study because of its declaredly more relaxed adherence to a Tamil-like diglossia, I have discovered since I began my survey that Kannada presents a further type in the typological array of diglossic communities. It is a 'different type' not so much because it is different from the Tamil type in the separation of the high and low varieties as because of the choice of an apparent social dialect for high or formal use. I have not gone into this matter fully enough to make any bold pronouncements about it, but I have learnt, on best authority, that the formal language of many learned Kannada speakers is similar to the home language of the Brahmin community of Karnataka. The status of caste as a dominant variable in linguistic diversification in India has already been questioned (Pattanayak 1975), and so any mention of caste here or elsewhere in this essay should not be interpreted beyond its face value. Be that as it may, if the language of a particular segment of a community is chosen by the rest of the community for prestigious usage, the diglossia symptomatic of such a situation would perhaps be based on the recognition of that chosen segment as in some sense synonymous with the heritage which initially motivated

or was chosen to symbolise the prestigious norm. Also, in such a situation, the prestigious segment would not be a diglossic community, for whatever they did would be prestigious any way; it is the rest of the population that would form a diglossic community. The model of excellence does, in this sense, come from avowedly the same society, all members of which claim adherence to the same culture and profess to speak the 'same language'. In the case of Tamil and Sinhalese, all speakers who claim to speak the 'same language' use are acknowledge linguistic symbols of diglossia in appropriate circumstances. What societies like the Kannada one show us is that a firm belief in a 'same language' concept does not necessarily make all members of such macro-communities diglossic or non-diglossic. Values such as prestige and symbols of such values segment such communities into smaller units. Linguistic communities are obviously, not entities which transgress functional diversification.

I am assuming all along that what I have learnt from educated Kannada speakers about this Brahmin versus non-Brahmin situation has some truth in it. Because of the way it seems to work, the Kannada community might even be found to be similar to the English one. In the English community, too, a model of linguistic excellence is often sought in the realms of educated speech in the South Eastern parts of Britain: these educated South-easterners are, then, the British Brahmins. Looking at it from this point of view, one might even argue that the Kannada community is not diglossic at all, but operates, like the community of English speakers, within a standard versus non-standard

distinction. Such an interpretation must, however, be received with caution, for, as I have said before, English speakers do not make a rigid distinction with regard to the functions of the two varieties while, from all account, the non-Brahmin Kannadigas do. At least for the present I would, therefore, treat the Kannada situation as a diglossic one. (See also Nayak 1967.)

The three communities I have chosen do, in this way, represent diglossic behaviour in all its ramifications. Adjacent geographical areas were chosen primarily for convenience; Sinhalese also happens to be my own first language. This choice has, however, proved to be a productive one rather than merely a convenient one, for the attitudes towards and some difficulties in the acquisition of literacy can now be traced directly to the nature of diglossic behaviour and people's disposition towards diglossia. We are in the same cultural area and are, therefore, able to reduce to a minimum the various cultural variables, which, if the situations were chosen from different parts of the world, might have been too numerous to control.

In all three communities, and indeed in the whole of South Asia, book learning is rated very high. Even five and six year old children do a fair amount of homework in reading and arithmetic each day and the parents are forced by the system to help the children with their school work every day. Some children know the first primer by heart before going to school although they are not necessarily capable of identifying individual words or pronouncing them in isolation. The teacher often

interprets this as 'knowing the test'; the repercussions of this on the child's learning are obvious. The entire phenomenon is, of course, circular. The parents expect the children to be taught book knowledge at school and the teachers set the class work in order to achieve this parental objective. The children are not always encouraged to discover, make and enquire; this is especially so in rural schools, and memorising forms an integral part of learning even at the university level. A concomitant factor of this slavishness and allegiance to the written word from the first day at school is that at school every school child is required to read everything that is written in his reading exercises. He is required to pronounce every single letter including those that are superfluous from the standpoint of the phonemic structure of his language but are there because of its diglossic character. The grammar, i. e. inflections and rules of concord, etc., being different in the written language, the child is neither able nor encouraged to read the sentences with an intonation that would be appropriate for their spoken counterparts that are familiar to him. Many parents make their children memorize whole reading passages which at school they rattle off parrot-fashion and also extremely fast. The written language being distinct from his own spoken usage, for which he naturally has a good ear, the teacher is often unable to identify the pronunciation errors in these fast readings; my experience has shown that in a number of instances where the teacher has confessed to having heard the distinct but related pronunciations prescribed for different letters the pupil has never made such a distinction in his pronunciation: I refer particularly to the various sibilants, the nasal consonants and,

in Tamil, the r-type sounds. These features I have described in this paragraph are, probably, symptomatic of all diglossic communities; they must not be interpreted as an implied criticism of teaching techniques in general.

I have given this preamble in order to focus on the important place reading has in the Indian child's early learning. The only language that the child is made to read and write is the literary variety. (Some sentences in the Kindergarten readers may contain a few sentences which resemble the colloquial variety, but they are only an extremely small proportion.) During their thirteen or fourteen years at school before going to university and then for three or four years at the University pupils are exposed to a great deal of high language. They read it and, when they write in their mothertongue, they write it. The irony, however, is that, in spite of this extensive training, it has been found that these people are not always able to perform in full accordance with the norms prescribed for the literary usage. In Sinhalese this has been noticed very frequently, and purists have criticised the universities for not giving their undergraduates sufficient training in normative usage. When I was a lecturer at the University of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) the Head of the Department of Sinhalese required us to take this as a serious criticism. As I have shown in De Silva (1974a), there are also some famous Sinhalese writers whose command of the literary norms occasionally falters. As I have said before, the Kannada situation is a slightly relaxed one and one could, in such a context legitimately expect a writer to represent the colloquial grammar and phonology in his writing. In Tamil, however, the cleavage

is very rigidly upheld and it is generally believed that secondary school children and university students do not violate the normative literary rules. Despite this belief experiments have shown that even Tamil language graduates violate specified norms and in fact Shanmugam Pillai (1965) shows tendencies toward a merger between the two varieties in certain circumstances.

What all this means is that the maintenance of the linguistic duality involved in these instances is an extra burden on the learner. Notwithstanding this, many native speakers of these languages want to restrict the term 'literate' only to refer to persons who are able to read and write correctly. By correctness they mean the ability to observe the normative literary rules with regard to spelling and grammar. The opinions, however, vary in the three communities in a significant way: this variation seems to be a result of the differences in the definition of prestige in the three communities (De Silva 1974b) and has an influence on the degree of 'correctness' that people are able to observe in their reading and writing. In a survey conducted to study the social expectations of literacy (and thereby the social definition) I have obtained some revealing results which I summarise below. The persons chosen for this survey had all completed their secondary school education and ranged from the B.A. first year (in India, the so-called pre-university first year) students to professionals holding doctoral degrees, including some Ph.D.s in the language in question. They belonged to different occupational categories such as clerks, teachers, lecturers, businessmen, civil servants and university students. They had all gone

through the machinery for acquiring sufficient literacy as required by their communities. Between sixty and one hundred were questioned in each community. Illiterate persons and school children were not included in the survey: among other things the illiterates are not able to pass judgement on matters like literacy and would generally be happy to be guided by established opinion; school children would not always be able to give dispassionate answers because they live in the midst of prejudices for or against matters pertaining to their school curriculum. The percentage of results with regard to correctness were as follows:

	Tamil	Kannada	Sinhalese
1. 'Literacy' is the ability to read and write correctly	100	50	30
2. 'Correctness' means the correct rules of spelling and grammar	99	45	15
3. 'Literacy' is the mere ability to read and write	0	50	50
4. Unable to decide between 1 and 3	0	0	20

As the above figures show, 100% of the people questioned in Tamilnadu wanted to define literacy as the ability to read and write *correctly*: correctness was defined by 99% as correct adherence to the rules of spelling and grammar as specified for the high variety. ( The one per cent that differed was concerned with correct spelling only ). Ideas were less settled in the Kannada community. In Karnataka, 50% wanted to define literacy as the ability to read and write correctly, defining correctness as

the correct adherence to the normative literary rules. An equal proportion was, however, happy to settle for the mere ability to read and write the letters of the alphabet as the definition of literacy. Among those who defined literacy as the ability to read and write correctly, the majority (45% of all those who were questioned) wanted the literates to observe correct rules of spelling as well as grammar while 5% was happy to restrict the meaning of correctness to spelling only. This divergence of opinion corresponds to the more relaxed attitude to diglossia among the Kannada speakers. In spite of this attitude to correctness, the overwhelming majority wants to retain the teaching of the high variety in schools. Contrasting with both Tamil and Kannada the Sinhalese response was divided significantly in favour of the mere ability to read and write rather than the ability to read and write *correctly*: while only 30% wanted *correct* reading and writing ability, 50% wanted no more than the ability to read and write as the attribute of a literate individual. Even among the conservative 30% there was no unanimity on the definition of correctness. One half of them implied by correctness 'correct Sinhalese usage' (not specifying it as literary or colloquial) which is not adulterated by foreign language influence. They were particularly concerned with the influence of the English idiom on Sinhalese usage through the Sinhalese writings (and the Sinhalese speech) of the English-educated persons. All in all, then only 15% wanted the literates in the community to be proficient in the normative literary usage. It is significant that 20% felt that, in the climate of present day polemics on the subject, a decisive answer was not possible.

The reader might find this vast difference between the Tamil and Sinhalese attitudes surprising, considering that high Sinhalese is a specifically written variety, which has, therefore, to be learned with particular care for that purpose only. In the case of Tamil, the high variety is spoken on formal occasions and, while the learning of it is reinforced by this oral-aural use, the divergence between the two (see Shanmugam Pillai 1965, 1975) might have forced people to give their answers in favour of communicability rather than the preservation of the duality. To a person who is aware of the different ways in which linguistic prestige is defined in these communities, however, these results would not come as a shock.

In Tamil, the ability to use the high variety is associated with social superiority and intimacy with the Tamil heritage. Formerly, the high variety of Tamil was almost identical with the formal, educated speech which showed much Sanskrit influence. The Brahmin speech has also been defined as highly Sanskritized. Since the ascendance of the Dravida Munnetra Kasagam (DMK, the ruling party in Tamilnadu) the Brahmins have been forced out of their prestigious place in the society and, along with this the high language has been stripped of some of its Sanskritic lexis; however, this has not made the language any closer to the colloquial speech, for more archaic features have been introduced into the language by the DMK philosophy in its quest for pure Tamil culture and language. The diglossic character has, therefore, not been affected by the state's political changes, and the high variety is still looked up to with the same respect and awe. (As I have reported before from the experience

of two persons, even the uneducated people would not take people seriously when they attempt to address them in public using the colloquial language known to the audience.)

The Sinhalese practice is different from this. Not being a spoken language, literary Sinhalese has no class or caste or any other similar overtones. Although historically speaking, literary Sinhalese is a resurrected variety of language that belonged to the 14th century (De Silva 1967), the polemics on the 'purity' of Sinhalese have ensured that the literary variety is not widely recognised as the symbol of the Sinhalese heritage. In the circumstances, the ability to use literary Sinhalese correctly only reflects the person's erudition in the Sinhalese language. Among the Sinhalese educated élite there are at least three points of view on the character of literary Sinhalese. There are the purists who clamour for the use of 'pure Sinhalese' phonology and lexis in the framework of literary grammar (for the implications of the term 'pure Sinhalese' see De Silva 1967 and chapter 5); while the purists want the Sanskritic and other foreign elements out, there are others who have no aversion to Sanskritic lexis and phonological representation, and would in fact encourage them, but within the accepted normative literary grammar; there is, in addition, a third group that regards the special literary features as irrelevant and cumbersome and, therefore, campaigns for the abolition of the present linguistic duality. Unlike in the case of Tamil, the ability to use the literary variety correctly is not associated with an intimate knowledge of, or a passionate belonging to, the glorious past culture of the people. The indecision

reflected in the answers given by 20% is a direct result of this lack of unanimity among the Sinhalese élite on this matter.

I have said earlier on that a situation akin to the Sinhalese one existed in Telugu a little while ago. In Telugu, the opponents of the classical or literary grammar have won their battle, at the recommendation of a Telugu Language Committee the use of the classical language for teaching and examination has been relaxed in the universities and the secondary schools. The Telugu Language Committee Report (1973) discusses the history of Telegu diglossia and the circumstances that culminated in the Committee's recommendations. As in Telugu, the only prestige that literary Sinhalese enjoys is that it merely symbolises a particular type of learning, namely the learning of the classical usage. Before I leave the Teluge Language Committee Report, I must hasten to add that the main reasons that seem to have influenced its recommendations are the absence of any substantial social prestige associated with the literary language and the difficulties in the teaching and the learning of an extra grammatical complex for a restricted purpose. (For more details see Krishnamurti 1976.) In the Sinhalese community there is, as I have mentioned before, a campaign against literary grammar, motivated by the same reasons. Although this campaign has not succeeded in abolishing the existing linguistic duality, the statements that have been made in answer to my questionnaire reflect somewhat the present-day thinking on the subject.

My questionnaires were in the respective languages. Among other things I was interested in finding out to

what extent the people's definition of literacy was compatible with their own performance in the literary variety (e. g. did those people who expected the literates to know the 'correct' usage and professed to know it themselves actually perform 'correctly'). With this in view, I designed some questions to elicit long answers (of the type 'why do you think so', 'explain why', 'what is your own opinion', etc.). The answers I received to such questions contained two to five sentences each and the total number of sentences formed a fair quantity on which the subjects' capabilities in the language could be assessed. What these sentences revealed was that people's expectations of literacy and their educational qualifications were not clear predictors of their own proficiency in the literary language. A person may declare that literacy is the ability to read and write correctly according to specified norms; he may say, with some pride, that he experienced no difficulty in mastering the literary grammar at school in a short span of, say, two years; he may possess a B. A. degree in the respective language; he may be one who has little patience with those who violate the normative rules of literary usage: yet he can make an average of one grammatical mistake for every two sentences and a spelling mistake for every three sentences. The following is a summary of such errors (the mistakes I have counted are those identified by groups of teachers who served as assessors during my survey).

**Tamil :**

100% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.

Total number of sentences written in answers: 170

Average of mistakes — grammar: 1 for every 4 sentences

— spelling: 1 for every 3 sentences

## Kannada :

50% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.

Total number of sentences written in answers: 121

Average of mistakes — grammar: 1 for every 2 sentences  
 — spelling: 1 for every 3 sentences

(There were 8 instances which appeared to be spelling mistakes but might also have been inadvertant slips of pen due to the similarity in shape of some letters of the alphabet. I have not counted these.)

50% did not want correctness to be part of the definition

Total number of sentences written in answers: 108

Average of mistakes — grammar: 1 for every 2 sentences  
 — spelling: 1 per sentence

## Sinhalese :

30% wanted the literates to know the correct usage.

Total number of sentences written in answers: 88

Average of mistakes — grammar: 1 per sentence  
 — spelling: 1 per sentence

70% did not want correctness to be part of the definition.

Total number of sentences written in answers: 102

Average of mistakes — grammar: 3 for every sentences  
 — spelling: 1 per sentence

I shall postpone the discussion of the theoretical implications of these errors till the next chapter. What is significant in these figures is that even among those who profess to know the correct usage and to follow it there is a fair number in whose writing various types of mistake occur and certain types of mistake recur. It

is necessary to enquire into the reasons for this. The primary school teachers in these languages are not unanimous on the time a child usually takes to master the literary grammar and spelling, but they all agree that, by the time the child is ready to leave the primary school (i.e. age 11), he will have mastered the rules of grammar and spelling, leaving only the lexicon to be acquired gradually as he goes along. The above figures based on the performance of adults contradict this belief. In the primary school there are five standards or grades. Some teachers believe that the child is capable of manipulating the literary variety in the third standard, some the fourth standard and some the fifth. These statements are very much tied to whether the teaching of the language in the primary school is in the hands of one teacher or many teachers. If the responsibility is in the hands of one teacher, he or she usually plays safe by raising the time to the fifth standard. Where the responsibility is shared by many, the customary thing is to pass the buck: statements like 'it will be done next year', 'it should have been done last year: it is too late now', etc. have often been made. I do not think that these attitudes necessarily reflect the teachers' incompetence or indecision; the teaching of the high variety has been done for decades and the textbooks and the teaching methods have evolved alongside this experience. The problem, as I shall attempt to show in my analysis elsewhere, is rather due to the relationship of the literary variety to the child's spoken usage. I do not wish in any way to put the entire blame for all problems of literacy on the diglossic character of these languages, but I am convinced that diglossia makes the acquisition of literacy more difficult than it ought to be and causes

indecisions and diffidence in the use of language which inhibit the child's free expression and creativity.

I have attempted to assess the primary school children's proficiency in the literary usage as well as the rate of increase in their proficiency by giving them five tasks, namely, reading of known texts, taking dictation of unseen texts and writing of free compositions. These tests showed not only that the children were not anywhere near full proficiency in the literary language by the time they were 11 or 12, but also that their rate of progress was slow in comparison to their rate of progress (that was more easily assessable), say, in mathematics. As an illustration of the errors the fourth and fifth standard children made in these tests, I have taken, at random, ten one-page free compositions written by them in each language and tabulated the errors as follows:

**Tamil :**

79 errors

Wrong spelling	40
Wrong inflection	15
Wrong word	6
Wrong grammar or colloquial grammar	6
Colloquial words	12

**Kannada :**

156 errors

Wrong spelling	85
Wrong inflection	15
Wrong grammar or colloquial grammar	23
Colloquial words	24
Wrong word	6

## Sinhalese :

## 197 errors

Wrong spelling	92
Wrong inflection or wrong postposition	26
Wrong word	2
Wrong grammar or colloquial grammar	49
Colloquial words	28

Before I leave the subject of free composition, I must define what free composition means in these school situations. Free composition here does not mean writings of children's own choice and imagination which would give vent to their innovative nature. In my experience, the teacher first sets one or more essay topics (e.g. the coconut palm, the happiest day in my life); then he usually writes on the blackboard some useful (literary) expressions that may be used and also some notes on concord, etc. Some teachers give a skeleton of the essay on the blackboard. The entire operation appears not so much an exercise in creativity as an exercise in literary usage. The mistakes I have counted as above were made in spite of this training.

If, after thirty or forty hours a week of exposure to a variety of language for over four years, the average performance of a child is no better than I have found and described; if the social expectations of literacy are not altogether compatible with the performance of the literacy learner, or indeed of the proponents of the high literacy ideals; if a social attitude enmeshed in such incompatibility creates a state of tension (De Silva 1974a; 1974b; Shanmugam Pillai 1972) that is not in the

best interests of creativity ; then the system that gives rise to these circumstances might not be the ideal one to perpetuate for the accomplishment of literacy as 'an ability to express oneself articulately for a variety of purposes, socially, intellectually and vocationally both in speech and writing; to command a capacity to read for information, enjoyment and enrichment and to respond sensitively and intelligently to what is said as well as to what is written' (Goddard 1974, p. 21). The teaching methods in these communities might need revision, but it would not be realistic to apportion full blame on the teaching methods or, indeed, the syllabuses. It is my contention that the circumstances and conditions of usage are not favourable enough for most persons to internalize the literary language (in any sense of the term 'internalize') to the point of having a full command of it. Where a form of language has a restricted function in the society, leaving little opportunity for the learner to use it fully, frequently and in a wide variety of circumstances, that language will always be comparatively alien to him; his personal spoken language which he constantly uses in every normal circumstance will exercise its powers more to block the individual's familiarization with this alien form than to facilitate it. Colloquialisms that have infiltrated the writings of many authors and the hybridisms created by many in their writings ( De Silva 1974a; Shanmugam Pillai 1965, 1972 ) are far more numerous than the literary influences on the speech habits of any section of the population ; any influence of the literary language on speech is primarily lexical and is the result of extensive reading.

The history of the diglossic situations under survey shows that the high varieties in all three are not natural to the communities but have been imposed upon their normal linguistic habits by revivalists who have, in the name of cultural renaissance and standardisation, resurrected linguistic forms which are several centuries older and whose overall structure is outside the linguistic competence that the individuals display in their speech behaviour as grown up members of the community (De Silva 1967). Bright (1970) proposes that the literary form should be stated as the underlying structure of the language from which the colloquial form may be conveniently derived by deletion rules. It would certainly be neat and convenient to do this on paper; however, if a form of language (in this case the literary language) is the basis or the 'underlying structure' of all speech acts and is therefore within the competence of the speakers, why is it that young individuals (who in similar circumstances can master aspects of a second language with two or three years intensive learning) find it difficult to operate it in full accordance with the norms despite their exposure to it for thirty or forty hours a week over a period of four or five years?

This takes us on to the subject of competence about which we hear a lot in linguistics and which has been differently defined by different persons for different purposes (Chomsky 1965; Campbell and Wales 1970; Hy-  
mes, mimeo; Le Page 1976; etc.). I propose, therefore, to devote the next chapter to a discussion of linguistic homogeneity and the notion of competence in some detail, but with particular reference to diglossic situations.

## **5. THE NOTIONS OF LINGUISTIC COMMUNITY, COMPETENCE AND DEEP STRUCTURE**

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The observations I have made in the last chapter and other related observations on linguistic diversity and language aquisition compel me to take an excursion into the realm of two notions in which modern linguistics is deeply enmeshed. These are the notions of linguistic community (or speech community) and competence. My primary objective in taking such an excursion would be to examine if diglossia and its problems as narrated in the preceding chapters could throw any light on our understanding of the individual in relation to his community and, more particularly, if there could be a significant relationship between the individual's

competence and 'the language of a community' as understood by the theoretical linguist.

The subject matter of theoretical linguistics has been categorically defined by Chomsky (1965) in his now famous assertion :

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows his language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.

(p. 3)

Idealization is thus taken as a major prerequisite to theoretical investigation. Other linguists follow suit. Notice following statement by Lyons (1968), again on the idealization of data :

When we say that two people speak the same language we are of necessity abstracting from all sorts of differences in their speech. These differences, reflecting differences of age, sex, membership of different social groups, educational background, cultural interests, and so on, are important and, in principle at least, are to be accounted for by the linguist. However, in the speech of any persons who are said to 'speak the same language' there will be what may be described as a 'common core' - a considerable overlap in the words they use, the manner in which they combine them in sentences and the meaning which they attach to the words and sentences. The possibility of communication depends upon the existence of this 'common core'. For simplicity of exposition, we shall assume that the language we are describing is uniform (by 'uniform' is meant 'dialectally and stylistically'

undifferentiated: this is, of course, an 'idealization' of the facts ...) and that all native speakers will agree whether an utterance is acceptable or not.

(p. 140-41)

These two quotations beg a number of questions which can take up many pages of discussion. One is, for instance, at a loss to comprehend why Chomsky bundles together memory limitations, distractions etc. and errors; while I am able to appreciate the meaning of the phrase 'random errors', I cannot see the implication of the term 'characteristic errors', for characteristic behaviour being in some sense regular for the individual, the branding of such phenomena as errors must be motivated not by the individual's own judgement, etc. but by the observer's use of some external yardstick. Here, we straight away resort to the communal or homogeneous usage, irrespective of whether we can observe it or not. Lyons mentions speech differences reflecting differences in age, sex, group membership, education, etc. These, according to Lyons, are relevant (unlike Chomsky's irrelevancies), but he is prepared to advocate that the theoretical linguist may ignore them all the same. What all this actually means is that any difference from a hypothetical norm is unimportant for the theoretician. This norm is, for Lyons, the 'common core' or the 'overlap' 'in the words they use, the manner in which they combine them in sentences and the meanings which they attach to the words and sentences'. Lyons's statement may be taken to mean that there is a dialectally and stylistically undifferentiated grammar and lexis which everybody knows and which is subsequently differentiated by the introduction of features reflecting the social, educational and such

other characteristics of the individuals. Or, alternatively, given a body of linguistic data, it is possible to abstract an idealised common core by subtracting from its totality all features reflecting social, educational and such other considerations. Such an attitude to linguistic data presupposes, to my mind, the availability of a theory of language-use which must be far more refined than any theory of language-use one can visualize namely, a theory of language-use which can predict precisely and exhaustively all linguistic correlations of age, sex, social group membership, education and cultural interests. Without such a theory by means of which the additions and subtractions may be performed, we can never see the extent to which the linguist's common core is a true reflection of the grammatical and lexical common core that might be held by all members of the community.

Linguists have thought for a considerable length of time that the content of this common core, or the idealised, homogeneous, communal aspect of language can be tested by referring to the native speakers' intuition. Lyons asserts in the above quotation that all native speakers will agree whether an utterance is acceptable or not; Chomsky holds the same view. Much of modern linguistics, indeed, depends on the reliance on intuitive judgements as a valid testing procedure. It has, however been shown conclusively by such linguists as Labov(1970 etc.) that, while 'generative grammar is the best discovery procedure we have', 'the search for homogeneity in intuitive judgements is a failure' (1970, p. 39). It is not necessary to go over the ground that Labov and others have covered adequately. Suffice it to say this: if

the idealization the linguist requires is abstracted from the linguistic goings on in communities, then we cannot, in the present state of our knowledge of language and language-use, abstract an idealization which is anything like complete, exact or testable. Grammarians who do not wish to take note of diversity (as done in, say, Bickerton 1975) should gear their grammars to a highly abstract level: the use of terms like 'community', however, pulls them down from such heights into conflict with issues relating to language-use.

Idealization, then, is based on unprovable assumptions. Idealization has, however, been taken for granted in linguistic science at all times. Every grammar book that has been written from Panini to the present day is an attempt to describe this idealized system at various levels. Behind the stipulation of the idea 'one language, one system' (remember Meillet: 'Chaque langue forme un système où tout se tient') there is always the notion of homogeneous linguistic community. Some grammarians have imposed homogeneity upon languages by making their grammars prescriptive in character. Following the argument adduced by S. K. Chatterji (1960), it may be said that Panini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is a prescriptive work of this sort. According to Chatterji, Panini's grammar seems to be the culmination of, or at least an important landmark in, an effort to restore the 'purity' of the Sanskrit language which had been 'corrupted' differently in different parts of the *Aryavarta* (Aryan India), in the eastward movement of the Aryan immigrants. It is understandable why a prescriptivist would choose to represent the language deliberately as homogeneous: his

aim would be to eradicate the 'vulgarities of the vernaculars'. Such puristic efforts are known in many parts of the world even today. It is one thing to impose homogeneity upon languages for prescriptive purposes; it is, however, an entirely different thing to assume homogeneity, at the expense of contrary evidence, in what are seemingly non-prescriptive, dispassionate analyses of human languages. 'Simplicity of exposition' (see Lyons above) is not in itself a valid goal, for achieving which, facts about language must be sacrificed. Where norms are clearly and unmistakably specified, homogeneity (or near-homogeneity) should be comparatively easy to achieve, with the help of the educational system and so forth. What one sees in the diglossias under consideration, however, is that in spite of the cumulative effect of all these circumstances, the individuals' performances are not always similar, and a cleavage persists between the specified norm and the individual's ability or competence as seen through his performance. I use the phrase 'competence as seen through his performance' purposely; for it is not possible to brush aside the irregularities in literary usage, on which I have commented previously, as products of memory limitation, distraction, and such other factors. All situations in which specified norms serve as models show us that, while the force of such norms is considerable, the people's behaviour continues to fluctuate, rarely reaching the norm in its precise dimensions.

The notion of homogeneity is very much related to the notions of monosystemicity and internalizability as characteristics of each language. Being homogeneous,

each language, in its idealized version, has one system. It is known in theoretical linguistics that the speakers 'internalize' this system. Homogeneity, monosystemicity and internalizability ensure that those same qualities perpetuate. However, if the language in some speech community were homogeneous, and, being homogeneous, this language contained a system that the speakers would internalize, then these three qualities of homogeneity, monosystemicity and internalizability might be seen as having the power to block any change. The belief in homogeneity, etc. is, however, refuted by the fact that the speech habits in no given geographical area have ever remained identical in the history of that area.

It is, of course, true that people who live in the same community and amicably interact with one another, speak in a manner which greatly resembles one another's speech. This is indeed to be expected from the nature of the learning resources available to them. First of all, being of the same species their biological learning capacities are similar; secondly, being in the same culture and environment, their world view tends to be similar; and thirdly – this is very important – they share the same linguistic data pool. In their acts of identity and communion people tend to make unconscious attempts to be like those with whom they wish to be identified (Le Page, 1968, etc.), and so, even if each speaker brought into the common pool his own personal brand of data, acts of sharing one another's features would emerge in the normal course of events. An assimilated form of speech behaviour characterising the entire community is, therefore, a natural thing to expect. It is, thus, an accident of

history that people living in the same ethnic, political and social communities, where communication with one another is essential, come to learn rules that greatly resemble one another's. The similarity thus created would enable the members of the community to interpret one another's rules with some success. If varying speech acts, pooled together as a collective data source, by people living in the same community, can in this way increase the tendency towards identical behaviour rather than decrease it, that the members of a group should have similar rules should not surprise us; for the same reason it might also be said that it should not be terribly interesting to us. What is interesting is that, despite the nature of the data resources, dissimilarities continue to prevail, distinguishing one individual from another. As history has shown us, the linguistic habits in any geographical area can change beyond recognition in the course of time. No norm, in however much detail it may be specified, can block this tendency to maintain diversity which characterises all group linguistic behaviour.

A person's ability to 'understand' another person's speech is not in itself proof that they share the *same* system. Before talking further about this point, let me hasten to add that if having the same system ensures understanding, there could be no acts of misunderstanding in communities which are allegedly homogeneous in their speech behaviour. Understanding depends on a variety of factors, but system equivalence need not be one of them. It is reasonable to assume that communicability rests on the listening participants' natural skill

to construct simultaneous sentences of their own, against which they may map the speaking participants' sentences. A one-to-one correspondence between these two is rarely achieved. That we construct our own sentences simultaneously is proven by the way in which we often fail to hear things in the utterance which we do not expect to hear, and by the manner in which we often complete the speaker's utterances for him, particularly when he is slow and deliberate (sometimes with disastrous results!).

This idea that simultaneous sentence construction is a necessary act in communication episodes seems more acceptable than the belief that communication depends on the availability of a shared common core. It is a truism that the most important requirement in verbal communication is the availability of a shared lexicon which contains sufficient clues for contextualization. In speech communities people develop their lexicons as verbal references for things, events, actions, etc. in order to talk about them. While, in the nature of language as we know it, grammar and lexis are inseparably welded together, people can get much farther with words alone than with grammatical patterns alone. Where the matter that is being communicated – that is to say, the topic of conversation – is straightforward enough not to lead to more than one interpretation, it is often possible to get by with the lexicon, without regard for language-specific grammatical organization. I use the phrase 'language-specific' advisedly; if the nature of human reasoning and the human ability to think in construction, etc. are reflected in the organization of human language, it would be impossible to utter a *completely* ungrammatical sentence,

that is *totally* contrary to the humanness of the human speaker: the features we refer to as errors are language-specific. (Language, here may mean the individual's language in my sense or a communal language in the grammarian's sense: this does not matter for the present argument.)

'Bus-tell-where', 'where-bus-tell', and 'where-tell-bus', are "sentences" which are unlike any corresponding sentences spoken by any Englishman. They are, therefore, ungrammatical with reference to the speech behaviour of the English. These "sentences", however, are not communicatively inefficient, for it is conceivable that the addressee would "understand" the implication of such an utterance. A totally unambiguous message is one which is contextualizable only in one way. Such a message may be regarded as one which has the fullest amount of understandability. 'Bus-where-tell', etc., in this sense, contain sufficient information with which the hearer may construct a situation. Such a situation need not be physically present; if it is not physically present, it must be constructable on the strength of the situational information in the message. The sentence that the hearer may construct simultaneously with the hearing of this utterance will be his own, and if the hearer is an Englishman, his sentence will hardly be like the one he receives from the speaker. This is an instance which exemplifies the irrelevance of a shared, language-specific grammar in order to engage in communicative acts.

In order to expand some notions I hold with regard to understanding, and more particularly, to understanding sentences which are deviant from the point of view

of the hearer, I wish to repeat here very briefly the results of a rather crude test I have already talked about in De Silva (1970). Out of some two hundred people questioned, everyone understood the utterance 'me-town-going-bus-where-stop-tell' to mean that the speaker wanted to go to town and was asking for the bus stop. To the same people was put the utterance 'me-brother-rat-kill'. All but four people interpreted this to have an SVO order as "my brother-kill-rat" (Tense, number, etc. were left vague). These persons had been required to give their responses immediately after the utterance had been made. The 'brother-kill-rat' interpretation was received in terms of this requirement. The four people who gave different interpretation took longer time: three of them took about forty-five seconds and interpreted the utterance as 'rat-kill-my brother'; the fourth one took about three minutes and gave the fascinating interpretation 'my brother is a rat. Kill him!'

What is the moral of this story? Where the utterance contains sufficient information, given via the shared lexis, etc., for the hearer to make suitable situational constructs, the simultaneous sentences he constructs would provide unambiguous understanding. In this act of understanding he disregards or ignores the deviances in the speaker's utterance. Where the speaker's sentence is deviant from the point of view of the hearer's grammar, the preceptive hearer may, depending on how obvious the deviances are, recognize the presence of such deviances; he may, if his memory is as good as his perception, also identify the exact places in the phonetic sequence which are phonetically, phonologically or grammatically

deviant. Not every person can, however, repeat a deviant sentence as he hears it, particularly if the deviances are more subtle than the ones I have talked about. The hearer's inability to reproduce all deviant sentences does not depend entirely on the subtlety of the deviances; it stems, at least partly, from his preoccupation with the simultaneous construction of his own sentences as a necessary requirement for understanding.

Unlike the 'bus stop' utterance, 'me-brother-rat-kill' does not contain sufficient situational information to facilitate a unanimous interpretation. Where situational information is negative or insufficient, a great deal of similarity between the input sentence and the hearer's simultaneous construct would be essential to yield an acceptable interpretation. Any sentence that an Englishman would construct to correspond to the utterance 'me-brother-rat-kill' would be of the SVO order, with the subject-object relationship reflected by their positions on either side of the verb. People who are used to interpreting NVN as SVO would naturally find NNV an ambiguous construction. Why, then, did ninety-eight per cent of the people tested give an interpretation which would reflect the SVO order as 'my brother-kill-rat'? It seems to be the case that, in making simultaneous sentence constructions in order to interpret deviant sentences, people only make the minimum distortion to the input sentence: one might call this the politeness consideration in sentence interpretation in so far as the hearer does the least 'damage' to the speaker's sentence; more seriously speaking, however, it might be all that the hearer can do in simultaneous interpretation, due to lack of time

for more considered and thought out interpretations. The minimum change that can be made in 'me-brother-rat-kill' to provide an SVO order is to move 'rat' to the position after 'kill'. Notice that those four persons who gave other interpretations took longer time: 'rat-kill-my brother' took about a minute and the one person who gave a very complex interpretation took much longer.

Although the hearers' interpretation favoured 'my brother-kill-rat', we do not know what the speaker actually meant. Where situational information is lacking, some language-specific grammatical similarity between the input sentence and the hearer's construction would help greatly. Where situational information is present, such grammatical similarity would not be of paramount importance. When, for instance, the two hundred persons that were tested as above were told that 'me brother-rat-kill' was uttered with a dead rat in hand, they all interpreted the SVO order to be 'my brother-kill-rat' unambiguously. Most verbal behaviour takes place in situationally definable circumstances. Uncontextualizable utterances are very rare indeed. The need for grammatical identity as a communication requirement is, therefore, never very great.

I hope I have succeeded in showing in the above paragraphs that the presence of a language-specific 'common core' (outside of lexis) is not always a necessary requirement of communication. (Let me hasten to add that my hypothesis is not based on just two funny utterances; it is not relevant to produce all my test examples in this essay.) This is perhaps a convenient point to examine the term 'competence' as introduced by Chomsky (1965)

and developed in various ways by others (e.g. Campbell and Wales 1970; Hymes, *mimo*; Le Page, 1973). I have said above that, in closely welded societies, individuals, by virtue of the availability of the same data resources (and other factors), learn to speak more and more like one another, and that, yet, diversity persists. The total competence that each person has for producing, interpreting and assessing utterances is not necessarily the same as anyone else's in that community. Quite rightly, no one who has described the notion 'competence' has found the need to invoke the hypothesis that competence is communally derived or shared; for all of them competence means nothing more than the *individual's* ability. By invoking the belief that languages in specific communities have homogeneous bases, they do, however, imply that each person's competence is, by and large, representative of the competences within the community as a whole. Chomsky's competence is, unlike the Saussurean concept of 'language', an individualistic one; and as one writer puts it,

The distinction between competence and performance in language is sometimes thought to be the same as, or similar to, de Saussure's between 'language' and 'perole'. But this is not so. His distinction was between one's stock of linguistic materials and the utterances that could be composed out of them. To suppose that this is similar to the distinction between competence and performance is like treating distinction between dough and loaves as similar to that between the ability to bake and baking.

(Cooper 1975: p. 28)

Chomsky's definition of competence is very non-Saussurean in that competence has been shown every-

where to be the individual's ability rather than a collective, social ability. Notice a few of his definitions: (My italics)

Every speaker of a language has mastered and internalized a generative grammar that expresses *his* knowledge of *his* language.

(Chomsky 1965: p. 8)

A distinction must be made between what the speaker of a language known implicitly (what we may call *his* competence) and what *he* does (*his* performance).

(Chomsky 1969: p. 9)

On the basis of a limited experience with the data of speech, *each* normal human has developed *for himself* a thorough competence of his native language.

(Chomsky 1964: p. 8-9)

Despite this individualist character of competence, Chomsky himself does, however, draw our attention, although with some qualification, to the similarity between de Saussure's *langue-parole* dichotomy and his own dichotomy of competence and performance (Chomsky 1965, p. 4). It is a legitimate question to ask why Chomsky felt any need for seeing some comparability between de Saussure's sociological notions and his own mentalistic notions. The answer to such a question, it seems to me, is a simple one. Although the notion of competence may imply an individual's mastery of his linguistic rules, Chomsky obviously wanted to see a social basis or social justification for it which would incorporate the notion of homogeneous community - a notion that is very important in his theory. More regard has been paid to the homogeneity of the community than to the individuality of competence in all Chomskian grammars (and any other

grammars) that have hitherto been written. Had the individual character of competence been the theme of linguistic investigation, the difference between competence and performance might not have emerged as very significant, and, there might not have been a necessary connection between the individual's competence and the so-called deep structure of '*the language*' which his competence is said to portray.

The question has not yet been answered as to how far it is reasonable to delve in order to discover the deep structure of a language. Lyons's use of the term 'common core' is perhaps synonymous with the term 'deep structure'. In order to arrive at the deep structure of, say, Tamil, it would be necessary to set up a neutral base in which the vertical and horizontal, or stylistic and dialectal, differences would be greatly reduced. Just as spatial diversity has to be, in some sense, got rid of, one might argue that temporal diversity ought likewise to be wiped out in this exercise. A base or deep structure from which all Tamil dialects may be derived by the addition of variable rules of a more superficial kind, may equally be the base from which several historical strata of Tamil might be derived. Despite this situation, it is the case that, while all dialects are said to be of the same language, the basis of which all speakers possess, not all historical strata are said to be derivable from the same base (unless this base is a very abstract one indeed). The question that has not been answered satisfactorily is, how far back is it legitimate to go in the history in setting up a deep structure for a language that would be meaningful in relation to the speaker's competences?

It so happens that the languages of which the deep structures are sought after by the linguist are languages identified as a whole, by the people who do so for a variety of reasons. Labels such as 'they speak the same language' are not necessarily linguistic labels but repercussions of the social, political, cultural, economic and religious thinking of the people. The linguist must, indeed, respect the people's wish to identify their verbal behaviour and label them; he must not, however, interpret the people's beliefs as scientific statements which are linguistically factual.

The question as to how many strata of 'the language' the competence of the 'native speaker' should be able to generate is an important one, particularly when we consider the diglossic situations in question. It so happens that, as I shall show in more detail later, the high varieties in all three communities under survey have been resurrected from the linguistic behaviour of several centuries ago. The natives of each of these communities believe that the high variety is part of their language; some of them, in fact, believe the high variety to be the real language of which the spoken counterparts are inadequate renditions. If we attempt to set up our deep structures with a view to accommodating the beliefs of the native speakers (- this being what the grammarian seems to do all the time), we have to write our grammars to generate several centuries of linguistic usage (or, more precisely, the usages of the thirteenth, fourteenth and twentieth centuries) simultaneously from the same deep structure. This is precisely what William Bright (1970) suggested as a treatment of Kannada phonology. Bright's suggestion, in brief, is this: the high variety is more

complex in grammar and phonology. If the underlying structure were taken to be more similar to this complex structure, then the low variety could be derived from it by simple deletion rules. Simplicity would not be the only achievement; such a statement would have a historical validity as well. This approach that Bright proposes have several drawbacks. If historical justifiability is a valid consideration in setting up deep structures, why stop at the thirteenth century? Why not make the grammar generate all known strata of 'the language' from the earliest historical beginnings of the community? In addition to this arbitrariness of choice (notice that this corresponds to the arbitrariness of choice in the creation of diglossias) there is the further, and even more significant drawback, namely, that such an approach somehow seems to favour languages whose historical antecedents are known: would, for instance, a deep structure written for a language whose history is not clearly known, be comparatively more tentative? There is the other theoretical consideration, namely, that a deep structure which may predict several centuries of linguistic behaviour in a community may also, by the very nature of its rules, be able to generate linguistic phenomena belonging to quite different communities. From the rules written for, say, Tamil, it would be possible to derive Malayalam and other Dravidian languages of South India as well as some non-Dravidian ones.

If the membership of a community shared an idealised grammar for their speech production, speech interpretation and speech assessment, the competence of each member must resemble that of every other member of

that community. The individuality of competence, however, contradicts such a hypothesis, and renders competence, and homogeneity two concepts whose relationship cannot be taken for granted in linguistic studies. In spite of the much repeated assertion that individuals master the correct grammar from exposure to limited and often incorrect data, the nature of an individual's competence seems to depend, to a large extent, on the amount of exposure he has had to linguistic data. Let us take one simple example consisting of the three sentences 'Give it to me', 'Give me it' and 'Give it me'. All so-called native speakers of English can say 'Give it to me', and may be said to have a rule to generate it. Many can say 'Give me it' and it may be said that most, but not all, have a rule to generate it. Only some can say 'Give it me'; a good many English speakers, then, do not have a rule for it. After living in areas where 'Give it me' is a possible sentence, those whose rules could not generate it earlier learn to say it and thereby extend their rule repertoire. It may be argued that this is a surface rule, but when we are not sure how deep we should delve (see above) the deepsurface dichotomy becomes less clear-cut. I think this was, in part, the linguistic essence of Bernstein's original position also.

What does all this mean for diglossia and literacy? In the diglossias under survey, the mere availability of a norm specified in great detail does not prevent performance diversity at all levels. My observations in the previous chapter and elsewhere (De Silva 1974a) would illustrate this. There are several lessons we can learn from these diglossic communities. When a person who has

learnt some mode of verbal behaviour, or, if preferred, one kind of rule schema, is exposed to further or different dimensions of behaviour, he acquires those new modes, at least partly, in a form affected by the mode which was already known to him at the time of learning; this does not account for all types of diversity that prevail in linguistic behaviour but it contributes to the perpetuation of diversity in a significant way. This is, of course, the old notion of interference, but I am using it here in a wider sense, to suggest that interference of the known (tentative) behaviour is a factor that affects the individual's learning, even within his own community. Writing is perhaps one of the most careful acts of linguistic performance. It may, therefore, be suggested that diversity in the grammar, etc. in the written usage, which would reflect varying degrees of distance from the specified norm, is closely linked with competence diversity. Where specified norms or models have functional limitations such that the behaviour episodes in terms of that model could never match in quantity or frequency the performance phenomena in terms of functionally more productive varieties, a performance behaviour which would be an exact replication of the specified norm would be very difficult to acquire.

The individual's rule repertoire is an ever-evolving thing. As I have said earlier, such evolution depends on the amount of exposure to linguistic usage. If a particular type of usage does, by its very nature fail to provide sufficient data to outweigh in bulk other data to which the individual may have access, the individual can rarely use it to its fullest extent. The imposition by the society

of such a usage which, by nature, is delimited in scope, can have an inhibiting influence on the learner, making him feel insecure in the domains, for the free expression in which, this alien form is the one to use.

What I have attempted to show is that, outside of the social pressures, there is no justification, particularly linguistic justification, for the maintenance of diglossia. The high variety, in its specified norm, rarely matches the individuals' competence, and the reasons for this, which I have briefly outlined above, are justifiable ones. Should the society demand a norm-like accuracy from the learners in such a situation? A careful dialogue on this subject would be sociologically and sociolinguistically a worthy one to conduct.

## **6. NATIVISM, PURISM; RELATIVE STABILITY OF DIGLOSSIC SITUATIONS**

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In the preceding chapters, I have implied that one reason for the insufficient skill shown by people in their attempts to perform in compliance with specified high variety norms is the distance between the high variety in question and their usual spoken language: this distance is not merely a formal one of synchronic nature; it also reflects several centuries of chronological distance. The major factor that has motivated the recovery of such an obsolete form of language as a model of excellence for prestigious usage is nativism and, its offshoot, purism. I propose to exemplify this in this chapter with some landmarks in the case history of Sinhalese diglossia, drawing parallels from other diglossias, where applicable, in order to establish the general properties of community attitudes which give rise to linguistic cleavages.

All South Asian diglossias are products of a revival of learning under the influence of classical models. In this renaissance, men of letters were required to perform in the linguistic form characteristic of the chosen Augustan model. In matters of dispute, the Tamils have learnt to look upto the *Tolkāppiyam*, compiled in the fifth century A. D. The Kannadigas trace their high variety of language to the works of the thirteenth century, via Keshiraja's grammar, *Śabdamanidarpana*. In Telugu, the best classical tradition was seen in the poetical works of the period eleventh to fourteenth century, and in order to elucidate the grammar of these works, a compendium called the *Bālavyākaranamu* was written in the nineteenth century. The Sinhalese look upto the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as the period of literary excellence and regard such books as the *Amāvatura*, *Butsarana* and *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* to be representative of this excellence; the thirteenth century grammatical work known as the *Sidatsaṅgarāva* is regarded as the classical exposition of the grammar of those works.

As shown above, each of these communities had, by the advent of the present century, a compendium of grammatical rules which served as a reference work and facilitated the renaissance. It is to examine the motivations for this renaissance that I wish to devote this chapter.

Where communities revive older forms of their 'own language' for literary (and other formal) purposes, they do so for reasons that are different from those which motivate the choice of a foreign language as the high variety. Before a community makes efforts to adopt

an archaic form of language for literary and /or formal purposes, that archaic language must be available in some describable form; but, not all communities in the world which can lay claims to such a heritage have chosen to revive it for prestigious usage. What, then, is the motivation for this choice? The primary motivation that leads a community to resurrect an older form of language as the model of excellence is contained in the anthropologist's concept, nativism. All diglossic communities in South Asia may be seen as situations characterized by properties of nativistic revivalism, which Kroeber (1948) describes as follows:

After two societies have come into sufficiently close contact for one to feel the other as definitely more populous, stronger, or better equipped, so that its own culture is in a process of being supplanted by the other, a conscious preservation effort or defence is produced. Such reactions have been called nativistic endeavours or revivals. They envelop with a sort of halo the culture that is passing away, and attempt to reaffirm or re-establish it, or parts of it. (p. 437)

Nativism when mobilized attempts to replace foreign elements with native elements; in this act, the nativist is not necessarily governed by the qualitative differences between different layers or varieties of native elements. The choice of 'best of native culture' as opposed to 'native culture' *per se* is an extension of the process of nativisation and it is motivated by puristic endeavours. Purism is, indeed, an offshoot of nativism and is often associated with it, but while the nativist chooses to replace what might be called a foreign culture with his own, the purist advocates the use of 'nothing but the

best' of the native culture as he defines it. Nativistic endeavours are nationally (or communally) unifying. Puristic endeavours may, however, separate the protagonists of general nativistic revival from the puristic revivalists and may, thus, serve, instead, as a divisive force. Nativism operates at the national or communal 'macro-level'; purism is a 'micro-level' activity. While I shall not make an undue effort in this chapter to distinguish between these two closely related forces, I hope it will be clear from my historical narration which events are puristic and which are non-puristic in the nativistic endeavours in question.

There is evidence of a diglossia-like behaviour even as early as the Old India period. Chatterji (1960), Pischel (1965), and others, have conjectured that Classical Sanskrit is the product of a revivalist activity, which arose as a countermeasure against the onslaught of non-Indo-Aryan influences on the Aryan people's linguistic habits, and culminated in the writing of Panini's grammar. The Sanskrit language, which surrounds the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and the language of the Vedic literature, which was probably akin to a popular usage, show distinct dissimilarities that point to a diglossia-like relationship. Effects of nativism are very clear in the evolution of Sanskrit in this way. Notice also the prestige in which Sanskrit was held in the Prakrit age, even in the further south where the spoken languages were predominantly Dravidian. Regarding the prestigious revival of Sanskrit, in otherwise Prakrit-speaking communities, Burrow (1973) says,

After the Christian era Sanskrit too began to appear in inscriptions, at first in competition with Prakrit, and finally in exclusive use. The inscription of Rudradaman (A.D. 150) marks the victory of Sanskrit in one part of India. In the South Prakrit remained in use longer and was not finally ousted by Sanskrit until the fourth or fifth century A. D. Eventually the use of Prakrit was discontinued entirely and from the Gupta period to the Mohammedan invasion Sanskrit – admittedly often incorrect Sanskrit – remained in exclusive use. (p. 58)

Some reasons for the choice of Sanskrit for prestigious use are given by Burrow:

The growing predominance of Sanskrit as opposed to Prakrit in the period succeeding the Christian era can be attributed to two reasons, one ideological and one practical. In the Maurya period the heterodox religions of Buddhism and Jainism had attained such influence as to threaten the existence of the old Brahmanical order. In the succeeding period, beginning with the usurpation of Pusyamitra (c. 188 B.C.), a reaction set in and there began a gradual decline of these systems in the face of victorious orthodoxy. This change in the religious atmosphere was reflected in language, and Sanskrit, associated with the traditional Vedic religion gained ground at the expense of Prakrit... The practical reason was that Sanskrit offered a united language for the whole of India. In the early Middle Indian period the differences between the various local vernaculars were not so great as to preclude mutual understanding, but even at this period Asoka found it necessary to engrave his edicts in three different dialects. With the progress of time the differences between the local dialects grew greater, so that Sanskrit became a necessary bond for the cultural unity of India. Furthermore the Prakrits were unstable and subject to continual change through the centuries. Any literary language established on the basis of a vernacular rapidly became obsolete. The

traditional Prakrits in the latter period were as artificial as Sanskrit, and did not have the advantage of its universal appeal and utility. For such reasons alone Sanskrit was the only form of language which could serve as a national language in Ancient India, whose cultural unity, far more influential and important than its political disunity, rendered such a language essential. (op. cit. p. 59-60)

I have quoted from Burrow at some length, firstly, to illustrate some of the motivations for choosing a high language, and secondly, to show the antiquity of diglossic behaviour in the subcontinent. India illustrates that, everything else being equal, diglossia once established remains so through the ages distinguishing the prestigious from the ordinary and shifting the linguistic focal points according to how prestige is defined. Despite hybridization, norms keep being specified.

Although, for reasons that Burrow outlines, Sanskrit was revived as the prestigious language of the country, later Sanskrit differs in many ways from earlier Sanskrit at all levels. Notice that in one of the above quotations Burrow himself uses the expression 'incorrect Sanskrit', that is, incorrect in so far as the Paninian norm has not been fully met. These errors are largely a result of the interference of the vernaculars. Referring to Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit which is one such 'incorrect' usage, Edgerton (1953) makes the following comment, focussing on its hybrid character which arises out of vernacular interference :

The most striking peculiarity of this language is that from the very beginning of its tradition as we know it (that is, according to the mss. we have), and increasingly as time

went on, it was modified in the direction of standard Sanskrit, while still retaining evidences of its Middle Indic origin. In all its texts, even the oldest... Sanskritisms are constantly presented cheek by jowl with Middle Indic forms, and often with hybrids which are neither one nor the other. These Sanskritisms are much too common to be comparable with stray Sanskrit loan-words or loan-forms which may have been occasionally adopted in many a genuine Middle Indic vernacular. (p. 4)

Burrow and Pischel make similar comments on the hybrid character of the later Sanskrit usage, even within the Brahmanical tradition. All these point to the difficulties in maintaining full normative accuracy in usages which are superposed upon communities, to function, for whatever reason, as varieties of language distinct from the normal vernacular usages that people adhere to in their daily verbal behaviour. Where the specified norms are not followed to their fullest extent, the norms themselves get to be reinterpreted in the course of time. Such changes are, however, not tolerated by the purist. Puristic endeavours are designed to ensure that the venerable classical traditions are maintained despite the users' inability to follow them at all times.

In the diglossias under survey there is an inherent paradox: the variety of language that is believed to be inferior, incorrect and inelegant invariably tends to encroach upon the superior, correct and elegant model prescribed for high usage, while the reverse does not always happen. Any stable separation of the two is only possible where the notion of prestige is differently interpreted so that the usage in the vernacular tradition is not reckoned to be an inferior activity. Swiss diglossia is an instance

of this sort. In Switzerland, Swiss German is not regarded as inferior to the so-called Standard German or mainland German: they are treated as two separate usages with parity of status. The most convenient way to illustrate how prestige is defined in Swiss diglossia would be to quote at some length from Moulton (1962). Contrast this account with the attitudes and behaviour obtaining in the diglossias of the subcontinent.

Every adult speaker is fully conscious of the distinction between standard and dialect, even though some do not control the standard very well. Further, the more educated and sophisticated a speaker is, the more he tries to make the distinction between standard and dialect as sharp and clear as possible ... This complete awareness of the distinction between dialect and standard is reflected in a number of Phenomena which seem to be unique to Swiss diglossia. Scholarly interest by the Swiss in the analysis and description of their many local dialects extends back over a century and a half, beginning with the work of Franz Joseph Stalder. In 1862, motivated partly by a mistaken fear that dialect speech was on its way toward extinction, work was begun on a far more ambitious national dialect dictionary, the *Schweizerisches Idiotikon*. Publication began in 1881, and is still continuing; it is carried on by a full-time staff of scholars in Zurich. A landmark in the history of dialectology—whether in Switzerland or elsewhere—was the Publication in 1876 of J. Winteler's *Die Kerenzer Mundart des Kantons Glarus* (Leipzig & Heidelberg 1876), a work which to a considerable extent anticipated modern phonemics and even the theory of the overall pattern. The 20th century has seen the publication of large numbers of dialect descriptions, notably the 20 volumes of the *Beiträge zur Schweizerdeutschen Grammatik* (Frauenfeld, 1910-1941), edited by the late Albert Bachmann; and the 11 volumes—to date—of the *Beiträge zur schweizerdeutschen Mundartforschung* (Frauenfeld, 1941 ff.)

edited by Rudolf Hotzenköcherle, Bachmann's successor at the University of Zurich. As I was writing the first version of this paper, I received a prospectus announcing that the first volume of a linguistic atlas of German Switzerland, edited by Hotzenköcherle, would soon be off the press.

Works of this type, written for a scholarly audience, prove only that the distinction between standard and dialect in Swiss diglossia is clearly recognized by Swiss scholars. But there are other signs that this awareness extends throughout the whole population. As early as 1921 there appeared a textbook written specifically to teach the local dialect: Karl Stucki, *Schweizerdeutsch: Abriss einer Grammatik mit Laut- und Formenlehre* (Zürich, 1921). (There is, of course, no such dialect as "Schweizerdeutsch", what Stucki's book teaches is Zurich German). This was followed in 1948 by Albert Weber, *Zürichdeutsche Grammatik* (Zurich, 1948), a work which bears the significant subtitle: *Ein Wegweiser zur guten Mundart* ("A Guide to Good Dialect"). I do not know whether this book found the wide popular audience which its author hoped it would. But I do find it highly significant that the publisher (Schweizer Spiegel Verlag) was sufficiently encouraged by its sales to follow it with several more books of the same sort. A guide to good Lucerne dialect was published in 1960 (Ludwig Fischer, *Luzerndeutsche Grammatik*); this was followed in 1961 by a "Zurich German Dictionary for School & Home" (Albert Weber and Jacques M. Bächtold, *Zürichdeutsches Wörterbuch für Schule und Haus*); and a combined grammar and dictionary of the dialect of the canton of Zug has been announced for the near future.

I mention these various works because I gather they would be inconceivable in the other diglossias which Ferguson describes. But there is more to come. During the 1940's there was a successful "Swiss German School" in Zurich, where *Auslands-schweizer* (native Swiss who have spent most of their lives abroad) and foreigners could learn how

to speak the local dialect. This was desirable from a social point of view, since only dialect is spoken at normal social gatherings, whether of humble folk or of the cocktail set. But – a very significant point – it was also necessary for more practical reasons. Any candidate for citizenship in the canton of Zurich – and, thereby, for federal citizenship – is required, as an earnest of his intentions, to demonstrate at least some knowledge of local dialect. Again I gather that such a thing would be inconceivable in other diglossias.

All of the things I have described are clear evidence that the diglossia of German speaking Switzerland is extremely stable. (p. 133–135)

Moulton's paper makes very interesting reading in that it describes the attitudes in a diglossic community which does not categorize the linguistic varieties involved along a scale of prestige. Purism, obviously, is not a feature amongst these attitudes. Contrast this with the puristic attitude embodied in the following statements which I quote in translation from Sinhalese:

Is there a grammar in colloquial usage? The correct answer is that there is not (D.V.R. de Silva 1961: p. 97)

Every language has two styles. The written style is one; the colloquial style is the other. The gap between the two is different in different languages. In Sinhalese it is fairly wide. However, the written style expresses greater erudition and is more grammatical. (Vitarana, 1969)

Having thus contrasted the nativistically and puristically motivated diglossias of ours with at least one other type of diglossia, and having established that diglossia-like behaviour is as old in South Asia as the Indo-Aryan origins, I now move on to describe the Sinhalese

case history. As I have said before, in all diglossias under survey, the high varieties are resurrected classical usages. It is the motivations for such resurrection that I wish to examine here.

Why were nativistic endeavours necessary in these situations? All these communities have suffered foreign domination, one effect of which has been the enthroning of the language of the masters as the vehicle of government and education. In the case of Sinhalese, the effects of colonialism were seen from the early fifteen hundreds for some three and a half centuries. It is, significant to note that, barring some war ballads, no serious literature was written in Sinhalese for about two hundred years from the Portuguese invasion in 1505. Although government announcements meant for the general public were written in Sinhalese from time to time, the grammar, vocabulary and the whole style of those documents contained a vernacular flavour, which gave them a different character from the classical literary works. Had the style of these writings been taken as a landmark in the evolution of the literary language in conformity with the spoken language, Sinhalese might have emerged without the cleavage that prevails today. There was, however, the need for restoring the culture of the Sinhalese that had been submerged during these centuries. The activities of the first movement to regain cultural independence might be called the early beginnings of nativism in the Sinhalese community.

What was the state of affairs at the time the revivalist movement began? Buddhism, which had been virtually the symbol of the Sinhalese nation, had been denied

its place as the state religion. Customs and manners which had characterised the Sinhalese way of life had been 'corrupted'. The Sinhalese had taken to drinking and gambling, vices which are generally attributed to Portuguese influence. Oriental learning, particularly the learning of Sinhalese and the Sanskrit classics, had declined owing to the loss of prestige that such education had enjoyed before. The Ayurvedic medical system had been replaced by western medical practices so that people of all levels had started developing a preference for the western system. The loss, in this way, of all the salient characteristics of the nation, needed to be rectified as a prerequisite to establishing national independence. The first independence movements were geared towards these ideals. It is significant that the nationalist groups that hold the destiny of the island's politics even today are the custodians of these symbols of the Sinhalese nationhood: I refer to the Sinhalese school teachers, Buddhist monks and the Ayurvedic physicians who may be regarded as the nationalist triumvirate.

It was at a time when the nation's survival was in such jeopardy that the pioneer of the national revivalism started his campaign for the liberation of the Buddhist Sinhalese culture. He was none other than Valiviṭa Piṇḍapātika Asaraṇasaraṇa Saraṇankara Sangharāja (1698–1778). Saraṇankara's aims were simple nativistic ones. He wanted Buddhism to be granted its rightful place; manners and customs which symbolised the nation to be re-established; and the Sinhalese language to be used for literary activity and learning once again. The important point is that Saraṇankara never specified the brand

of Buddhism, culture or language that he wanted revived. He was a nativist, but he certainly was not a purist. Saranankara encouraged the learning of the Buddhist scriptures and classical Sinhalese texts; in order to facilitate the learning of the classics, he wrote commentaries. The language he used in his own writings was, however, different from the classical language and, like the language of the government documents, bore a great deal of resemblance to the colloquial language as far as we may reconstruct it from our knowledge of the history of Sinhalese.

Saranankara, however, produced a very powerful band of scholars, with a mastery of Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit, to take his lead to campaign for national liberation. With the discovery that the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries constituted the Augustan age of ornate Sinhalese literature, these scholars aspired that, in order to make the renaissance effective, all literary activity should follow that model in every conceivable way. In terms of this aspiration, they campaigned, not merely for the use of Sinhalese as did their Guru, but for the use of classical grammar and idiom. Thus, the first stage of purism was born, as a development of Saranankara's nativistic movement.

In order to elucidate the grammar of classical language, these scholars resorted to the *Sidatsaṅgarāva*, the thirteenth century handbook for the versifier, in the belief that it was a general grammar of the Sinhalese language. What is important for our purposes is not that the *Sidatsaṅgarāva* is a compendium for the poet rather than the prose writer, but that there was *some* grammatical work

in which the revivalists could take refuge. Notice, as I have already said, that all South Asian diglossias have evolved within the availability of a reference grammar, even though there may not be a causal connection. (The status of the *Sidatsaṅgarāva* has been dealt with in De Silva (1970b) and will not concern us at this point.) It is also worth mentioning, whether it is significant or not, that all these reference grammars dealt largely with the language of poetry, as did the *Sidatsaṅgarāva*, although the rules were interpreted by the purists as suitable for wider use, including prose work, by the addition of a few features, particularly in morphology, to make them more general.

Notice that, so far as I have narrated it, the Sinhalese situation follows the pattern of other diglossias in the subcontinent, particularly the Telugu situation eminently described by Krishnamurti (1976). Krishnamurti assumes that the spoken and literary Telugu had already diverged by the eleventh century. In Sinhalese, one can see an early divergence between the languages of prose and poetry, but there is little evidence to assume any diglossia-like diversification. This is, however, unimportant for the present purpose. The important point is that, comparable with the Sinhalese situation, there was in Telugu an acceptance of the language of the early poets as the model for all later writings. I have mentioned above that both the official records and the writings of Sarāṇankara conformed to what might have been the spoken language of the day. A similar situation obtained in Telugu, too, during the early period of revivalism. Referring to the books written in Telugu at that time

(which was later than Sinhalese revivalism), Krishnamurti points out that they were written in the same style as the nineteenth century local records, which showed some classical features, but was predominantly an educated colloquial variety. Just as it was left to Saranankara's pupils to stage the campaign for pure classical usage, even so it was left, in Telugu, to Chinnayasuri and several of his followers to codify the classical rules and make an impact on the language attitudes of scholars in order to defend the classical usage. I draw these comparisons from Krishnamurti's description of the Telugu situation. Similar comparisons may be drawn elsewhere as well.

From this point on, however, the Telugu attitudes began to differ from the Sinhalese attitudes. In Sri Lanka, the campaign for the classical usage was contributed to unanimously by all men of Oriental learning in the country. The teaching of Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit was first in the hands of Buddhist clergy and the small number of vernacular teachers. They had a say in the preparation of syllabuses and teaching material. The school inspectorate incharge of vernacular education was drawn from amongst the laymen who had monastic learning backgrounds. There was, therefore, no occasion to have a dialogue on the suitability or otherwise of the classical format, and the prestige with which it was held was never questioned. The situation in Telugu is different from this. With the leadership given particularly by G. V. Apparao, P. T. Sreenivasa Iyengar and G. V. Ramamurti, the Telugu literati began to question the usefulness of the purists' position on language, especially in the face of the writers' inability to perform in the classical idiom in full conformity

with the norm. This departure is a very significant one in that the origins of the present linguistic situation in the two communities may be traced back to it.

It is not surprising that the vernacular schoolmasters were fully dedicated to the classical tradition. I have already said that the national liberation movement was, and still is, manned by the vernacular school teachers, whose subject, namely the Sinhalese language, had been pushed aside by the more prestigious language of the foreign power of the day; the practitioners of indigenous medicine, whose efforts had not been recognized amidst the advent of western medicine; and the Buddhist clergy who have always been regarded as the custodians of Sinhalese culture. Of these three groups, most good indigenous physicians have always been required to learn Sanskrit through which alone were the treatises on Ayurveda available to them; all Buddhist monks must learn Pali which is the language of the Buddhist canon; the linguistic backgrounds of these two groups, therefore, went beyond the limits of the Sinhalese language. However, the only equipment that the vernacular school teacher had to possess was a knowledge of the Sinhalese language. The status of the vernacular language teacher has been inferior to the status of the 'subject' teachers and English language teachers. It is natural, therefore, that the vernacular teacher should defend his expertise, by maintaining it in its difficult form, making it a hard skill to achieve: the more difficult it is to learn, the more specialist the teacher would be. The role of these incentives and motivations to compel the vernacular teacher to support the classical tradition would be considerable.

During the early times, literary activity was in the custody of a small number of elites. With the advent of the novel and the daily press the reading public increased in number very rapidly. With this popularization of the written word, the literary idiom slackened somewhat in the direction of the spoken language and consequently the writers began to experiment with the spoken idiom in appropriate contexts. The present situation is that all sentences within quotation marks in novels are generally written in spoken idiom while the rest of the narrative is predominantly cast in the classical format. The religious and literary controversies, too, contributed, during the second half of the nineteenth century, to the development of the language of Sinhalese literature by allowing for the unchecked interference of the spoken grammar and idiom. Sarathchandra (1950) refers to this period as:

a period of controversy which lasted for about half a century, the most important outcome of which was it rendered the language a more plastic instrument for the use of the writers of pure fiction; who appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. (p. 41-42)

He also observes that :

between the time of the last works of the classical period and the controversies, the language had undergone many changes, both grammatical and otherwise and some of the older controversies provide us with example of the earliest attempts to write in the unsettled idiom of the day (p. 45)

Although this period contributed to the breaking down of the rigid difference between the spoken and literary languages, the trend was reversed by the rise of

a second stage of purism as a counteraction against the tendency towards hybridisms in the literary usage. Purists once again began to strengthen their stronghold on schools and reinforced the teaching of classical grammar in the classroom. The movement was headed by a popular teacher, referred to by his adherents as *guru devi* 'god among teachers', namely, Kumaratunga Munidasa. Munidasa was a man of great learning in Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit, and was a popular writer, teacher, teacher trainer and school inspector during different periods of his life. He is most remembered as the founder of the *Hela Havula* 'the Pure Sinhalese Movement': Munidasa and his followers were obsessed with the antiquity of the Sinhalese race and, therefore, the Sinhalese language, and were opposed to the belief that Sinhalese was a derivative of Sanskrit. Munidasa's followers have, from time to time, attempted to show that Sinhalese was of even greater antiquity than Sanskrit or Greek. In this linguistic fanaticism, the meaning of the term 'Pure Sinhalese' was shifted somewhat, and the élite were split into two camps. There continued to be an orthodox purist tradition which we may call the 'Orthodox Classicist' who believed that the grammar of the classical works should be employed in all writings and, in order to create ornateness, Sanskrit lexis should be allowed unrestricted, written in an alphabet adequate for that purpose. There was a rich Sinhalese alphabet with which the Sanskritic lexis could be written; this was known as the *misra sinhala hōdiya* (see De Silva 1970b). The *Hela Havula* purists differed on the use of the Sanskritic lexis. They opposed the use of any loanwords, and advocated the use of a phonology akin to the pre-thirteenth century poetic phonology. A

corresponding alphabet, which was stripped of the Sanskritic letters like the aspirates, palatal and retroflex sibilants, etc., was always available as a poetic alphabet; this was known as the *Sudha sinhala hōdiya* (see De Silva 1970b).

This is where the Telugu situation differs from the Sinhalese situation. In the Telugu community, the trend set by Apparao, Sreenivasa Iyengar, Ramamurti, and others went on uninterrupted, gaining currency as a worthwhile movement against classicism. In the Sinhalese community, on the other hand, even the obvious benefits in the use of the colloquial idiom were lost sight of with the strengthening of the neo-purism. This neo-purism split the elites into two camps, but only to the extent that they differed in the relative antiquity of the desired norm; they were both classicist otherwise. There have been in Sri Lanka, from time to time, various individuals who felt that the classical requirement was a handicap and an embarrassment, but there has never been an organized movement against classicism.

Kumaratunga Munidasa's linguistic philosophy, which is no different from any other purist's is given below in translation. Notice the metaphor of law and society in defining the relationship of grammar and language; notice also how similar this notion is to the notion of group standards that Sprott describes in the paragraph I have already quoted from him. Kumaratunga (1492 B. E.) says:

Nowadays some people seem to think that grammar is irrelevant, To him who suffers from indigestion, food is.

indeed a nuisance. From the primitive hunter's point of view clothes are only things to laugh at. When one looks at things this way, one is not amazed that there are men who hate grammar. In civilized society, however, language needs grammar. If there is permission to violate the law, it will be two the mirth of the criminal. If, for the happiness and comfort of the criminal, social laws were allowed to be violated, civilization would begin to disappear straight away. If there were permission to violate language rules, the ignorant ones would certainly be happy...

It would provide a way to conceal their ignorance... In this country, alas, ignorance is erudition; knowledge is a thing to ridicule. An attempt must urgently be made to remedy this situation. (Intro p. 1)

The fact that, during the period of the controversies, the classical format lost the prestige it has enjoyed previously is an important event: for, where there is no definable prestige associated with the literary form, individuals are not compelled by any sense of allegiance to campaign for the retention of the disparity. Notice that, although there is no organized movement against the disparity, people, when questioned individually, have shown comparatively little enthusiasm for the continuance of diglossia in the Sinhalese community. The collective allegiance and individual dissent are obviously in conflict. It is the absence of such a conflict in an appreciable scale that has enabled the Telugu speakers to be persuaded against the continued retention of the linguistic duality at the secondary and tertiary levels of education, as seen in the Telugu Language Committee Report (1973). The maintenance of stability in Swiss diglossia may also be attributed to this absence of a conflict. It is, on the other hand, the presence of such a conflict that has

motivated the Sinhalese society to use the written language in a fluctuating manner and to be undecided in their general attitude to the diglossia at the school level. The results I have obtained in my survey suggest that points of tension are characteristic in the Kannada and Tamil society also, and it is my belief that a detailed historical study would support this observation.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

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Diglossia is not a purely linguistic issue. Diglossia is a characterization of the community, and, on the strength of their stratification, distribution of values, definition of prestige, and concomitant linguistic symptoms, communities may be called diglossic or non-diglossic. As I have been examining diglossia in this essay in the context of literacy, the linguistic symptoms have, naturally, been my main concern; I have, however, made brief remarks on social aspects of literacy, particularly social motivations for defining literacy in one way or another.

There are several types of diglossic communities. The most stable type includes Swiss diglossia, where the vernacular usage is not regarded as incorrect or inelegant but is, rather, taught, written in and cultivated as a respectable mode of behaviour. Greek is not like Swiss in

this respect, but in Greek, too, both Dimotiki and Katharevousa are written, although with functional differentiation. The South Asian diglossias differ from these two in that writing is demanded in the high varieties. In South Asia, too, there are more than one type of diglossia: there are those like Tamil, that fall in line with Arabic, etc., and derive the prestigious high norms on religious and cultural considerations; there are those like Telugu and Sinhalese where such considerations do not apply. Telugu and Sinhalese have gone their separate ways on the basis of purism. All diglossic behaviour in which the linguistic usages of the classical times have been revived for prestigious purposes are instances of purism (which differentiates the Swiss situation from the South Asian situations). Where the choice of the classical usage has not been motivated by overwhelming religious - cultural considerations, the classical form survives merely as an elitist's preference. Puristic efforts of that order, with little or no religious-cultural backing, cause tension and uncertainty as seen in the Sinhalese situation. In Telugu, purism has been, so to speak, nipped in the bud, allowing for a free dialogue. On the advantages or otherwise of the classical tradition; it is this non-puristic approach that is responsible for the different situations obtaining today in Sinhalese and Telugu although they had remarkably similar beginnings in the early nativising times.

I have shown that certain writing systems have the potentiality to create or enhance cleavages between the literary and non-literary usages. Although diglossia is not entirely dependent upon the availability of a literature, the diglossias of South Asia are closely associated

with literary histories. We do, in fact, see the early origins of South Asian diglossia as a product of notions of literary excellence and, of course, linguistic purity. It is not surprising, therefore, that the literary performance in these communities is governed by puristic ideals. It is in this area that I have attempted to distinguish between necessary literacy and sufficient literacy.

Any insistence on normative standards of correctness is puristic. One cannot think of any other name to refer to attitudes which embody the notion that the language that is spoken by the people in their daily social intercourse is, somehow, incorrect. Purism, I have said, is socially divisive: it divides the community into purists versus non-purists or into different brands of purists. It may also create an atmosphere, sometimes by threat of force, in which people are compelled to declare their allegiances to the normative behaviour despite their faltering individual performances. Such a situation is an unfortunate one, for, fear of being wrong often deters experimentation in creative expression. The teaching system tends to abide by the puristic sentiments and to perpetuate normative teaching irrespective of these consequences. Notice that, as I have said before, I am not interested merely in people's ability to sign their names and fill in a form; my interest is in people's acquisition of literacy in terms of Nora Goddard's definition already quoted. The tensions that diglossia create seem to be damaging in the pursuit of these goals; the damage, however, cannot be quantified without a great deal of intensive research involving an interdisciplinary team of psychologists, sociologists, linguists and educational theoreticians.

I have only scratched the surface of the problem.

Diglossia poses many problems to the theoretical linguist. As I have shown, albeit briefly, even such basic assumptions in theoretical linguistics as competence and deep structure take different meanings in these contexts. The implications of the acceptance of these terms as of the same universal validity have been questioned elsewhere; I have made some remarks along the same lines, but with special reference to diglossias. If diglossia is not an institution which is theoretically relevant, there is little point in pursuing with diglossia studies. It seems to be the case, however, that diglossia throws light not only on social motivations of language maintenance and use but also on implications of social norms and related performance on the formulation of linguistic theory.

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